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Can Capcom recapture the survival horror fear?



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Raiden is getting nasty as Konami gives us the latest

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FUTURE NOW

Why Treyarch's FPS is an important first step for console multiplayer

Comeback issue



YEEEEOWAAAAA!
That was the noise that marked the comeback issue. It was a noise that terrified most of

Play's office colleagues, horrified the others and maybe sent a shiver of sexual excitement down a few spines, too.

Why make that noise? Because of *Resident Evil 6* and its eye-scorching explosions that gave us such guttural, excited reactions. Because of *PES 2013* and the primal howls we made to celebrate goals scored. Because this is the issue of comebacks. These are two series that defined the early years of PlayStation but have undoubtedly lost their way in recent times. But we're happy to report that, finally, *Resident Evil* and *PES* have come back home. Welcome back, guys. We've missed you.

It doesn't stop there. In fact, this month, you're spoilt for choice – *Borderlands 2*, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*, *FIFA 13*, *Sound Shapes*, *LittleBigPlanet Vita* and *Dead Or Alive 5* also check in for review. And then there's the future too, as we look at why *Grand Theft Auto V* will be such a big challenge for Rockstar while Konami fills us in on more *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* details. *Black Ops II* could also define the future of all multiplayer games on console: find out why in our big Treyarch interview.

As for us, it's back to *Resi*, *PES* and weird noises. It's what we do best.

Enjoy the issue.

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Editor

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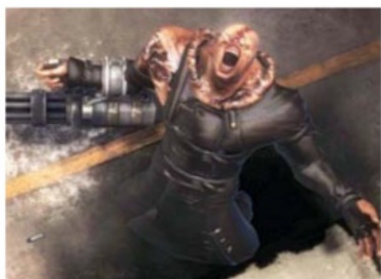
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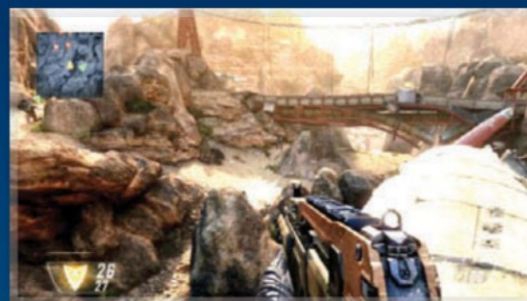
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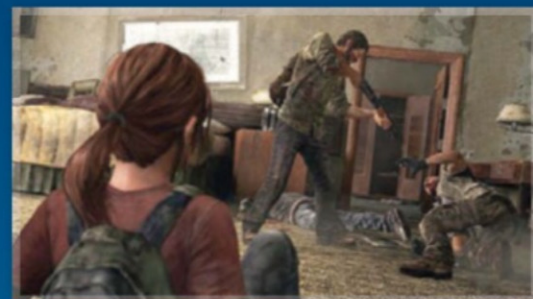


BLACK OPS II MULTIPLAYER

Watch the top Black Ops players in the world give the multiplayer – and new perks – for the latest Call Of Duty a good workout.

THE LAST OF US ANGLE FEATURE

Naughty Dog's latest checks in as we give you a peek behind the curtains to show you how a huge triple-A exclusive is put together.



PES 2013 17 GOALS

Want to see our amazing PES 2013 goals? Oh. Here are 17 of our non-amazing PES goals anyway. Hopefully that will do. Right?

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

Namco Bandai's brilliant brawler leads our review section this month... it has a wealth of content but is it actually any good?



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!

Grand Theft Auto V

THE MAKING OF

GTA V is coming. But will it be a revolution of a well-worn template, or simply a shinier version of what we already have? Speaking to various open world developers – the designers, producers, and artists behind franchises such as Red Faction, Far Cry and even the original GTA – Play asks if the urban crime-orientated sub-genre is going stale, and if GTA V can do anything to reinvigorate it



Like it or not, the term 'open world' has become synonymous with one series' interpretation of the genre: *Grand Theft Auto's* free-form satirical slaughter. Rockstar's outrageously successful franchise might share mechanics with games as diverse as *Skyrim* and *Super Mario 64*, but thanks to the popularity of the series 'open world', this doesn't mean dialogue trees, mushroom kingdoms and elves: it means shooting and cars. Gangsters and gangstas, pimps and hos, drive bys and funny radio stations.

When Mike Dailly was helping build the original *GTA* in the mid-Nineties, he could have had no idea what the series would go on to achieve. But he knew that he had something novel even then: *Race 'n' Chase*, as it was known at the time, was a game with an interesting hook: you played on the wrong side of the law, committing crimes and outrunning the cops, all from a top-down perspective.

It was a controversial approach, letting players be the bad guy, and *GTA* exploited and celebrated its wanton nature to great success. But, according to Dailly, it wasn't the ability to run over everyone in the world that got people interested: it was the racing that was the

essential to its success. The criminal aspect was a happy accident of wanting to give players more cars to mess around in.

"The core of *GTA* was a *fun* driving game. Something you could sit down to play, and enjoy simply driving around it. All great games have a *core* which is highly enjoyable, and the rest of it is simply fluff to give you something else to do – just look at any great game, and you'll easily pick out the core mechanic to it. *GTA's* driving was great fun, and from it sprang the rest of the game. We realised early on that something else that would be great was stealing cars. Driving around, spotting a car you liked, and just taking it. And once you start down that crime path, it's easy to see where the rest of the game came from."

Numerous sequels, a handful of BAFTAs, a slew of imitators and pretenders, and billions of dollars later, *GTA* is a true pop-culture phenomenon. Everyone can agree on that. Whether *GTA V* is going to be an evolution or a revolution however is very much up for debate. Now, Dailly believes that the newness that propelled *GTA*



into superstardom has faded, tired. *GTA V* needs to deliver something different from its predecessors, but Dailly isn't sure it will.

"I think *all* mechanics need to adapt. The *GTA* format is getting a little tired now, and needs a revamp." Dailly, now involved in social and mobile games development, insists. "It's getting better looking, but the core mechanic needs a bit more variety added to it – it's getting dull. Open-ended gameplay is fine, but all games need to evolve or they get stale."

"I suspect [*GTA V* will be] just more of the same. Prettier graphics, same old gameplay. They need to change things. Do something a little different. Play a corrupt cop, play a force of rebels under a military dictatorship struggling to free the country – something! Each of these use the same basic game as *GTA* does now... but would introduce a new "feeling" into the game."

Dailly's proposal for freshening things up is interesting, especially since *Sleeping Dogs* just became a hit by having players control an

undercover cop with a penchant for white-hot violence. Even so, it wasn't exactly a world away from *GTA*: the same old mission loops were evident, and even songs that were previously in *GTA* made their way over.

In short: haven't we been driving from A to B to meet person X and then hotwheeling it back to safe house Y for too long now? Dailly and the team he worked with popularised this template 15 years ago: shouldn't there be broader changes if *GTA*, and the genre as a whole, is to succeed in not becoming predictable?

Absolutely not, according to Wayne Adams, environment artist at Volition, the firm behind the lauded *Red Faction Guerilla* and the *Saints Row* series.

"I honestly don't think they should change. Open world games to me should be centred on exploration. You wouldn't make an RTS into a FPS. Each genre at its centre is still the same. Open world games are a genre. >



Tennis For 2(0 Million)

Will we be able to play tennis? Looks like it. Playing a few rallies might not speak highly of Rockstar's dedication to injecting some more fun into the series, but we're sure it'll be one of many distractions, each and every one powered by the amazing Euphoria physics engine. Just think of it as your entry into the life of a carefree sociopath (they all play tennis), and imagine bludgeoning your opponent to death.

Multiple Personalities

Maybe we're jacking the wrong car here, but we're convinced that *GTA* is going to have multiple playable characters. These shots seem to feature different protagonists: maybe some are multiplayer shots, but we doubt all are. With *GTA IV* eventually having three interconnected stories, and – SPOILER – *Red Dead Redemption* having two playable characters, we'd be surprised if *GTA* didn't continue in this vein.

> "From my viewpoint, open world games need two types of missions: super story-integrated quests which really immerse the player in the world, its people, culture, etc, and side missions that complement the world, and those parts should have a little taste of exploration in them. Seeing new vistas and surroundings. If you are going to make a 'distraction mission' that loops multiple times, there need to be unique outcomes that affect the world."

So it doesn't look like the classic mission loop is going anywhere soon, being as it is so entrenched in the established design. That might not be as bad as some think: if there's one thing developers seem to agree on, it's that the true beauty of open-world games is exploration and the environment around the player. "When I play an open world game I never do the main storyline first," Adams told us. "I like to get to know the world so that when I am working on that main quest I'm not just some outsider walking on someone else's turf, I'm a member of this world."

Building the world is also of paramount importance to Dan Hay, *Far Cry 3*'s producer. "As you explore the island, you will have the feeling that there's always something around the next corner. That being said, we don't ever want the player to feel lost in the world. Instead, we're presenting exploration as an opportunity, whether you're checking out an abandoned shipyard or diving into an underwater cave, there's always something new, and you're always rewarded for taking a look around. "We are

making sure that while you're out there, you get something out of it; something that can be used to your advantage in the game."

Dailly, however, still isn't convinced that there's actually anything that can be added to open world games that will really, radically change them. According to him, not even the launch of the next console generation will change things up significantly. "I don't think there's anything particularly new on offer to the open world mechanic. Bigger machines means more power, and that means a nice-looking environment, and a slightly more believable world, but the core game is just the same. I don't think the next generation will offer too much more than that; it's no longer down to how many shiny pixels they can render, or how many people they can get in the world, it's about the experience *in* the world, and the possibilities are the same now, as they are in the future – until we get holodecks of course!"

What Dailly is convinced of is that the way we consume our open world games has to change. In a 2004 editorial for videogames trade mag *MCV*, Dailly stated that he wanted to see "smaller games, more often." *GTA IV* came and went as expected, but *Episodes From Liberty City* seemed to suggest that while Rockstar isn't cutting back on its world, it is open to releasing smaller, focused experiences within it.

"I certainly hope so. I still can't understand why *GTA* provides massive worlds, which the vast majority of folk never get to see. They've paid for it... why not let them see it all? The core idea I

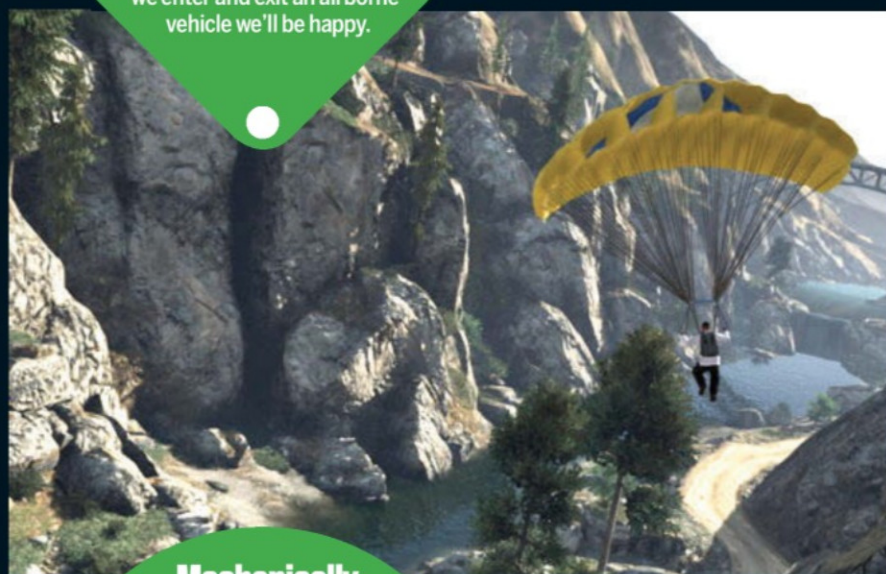
Beyond The Jump

Look! The CrazyTM! It's Back! Critics of *GTA IV* often focus on the lack of ridiculous activities to get up to: *The Ballad Of Gay Tony* addressed this, and *V* looks to carry on the trend. This parachuting shot should be the start of all sorts of nonsense (although we doubt we'll see the jetpack return). As long as we get parachutes every time we enter and exit an airborne vehicle we'll be happy.



Mechanically Sound

GTA has always excelled at car chases: a result of excellent AI, great worlds and fun escape/evasion mechanics. Expect *GTA V* to go even further. Early rumours suggested that there would now be more ways to shake the cops – such as listening to the radio to get roadblock alerts – and more ways for them to stop you. These may not come to pass, but just look how low that chopper is in the above picture.





tech-ing it out

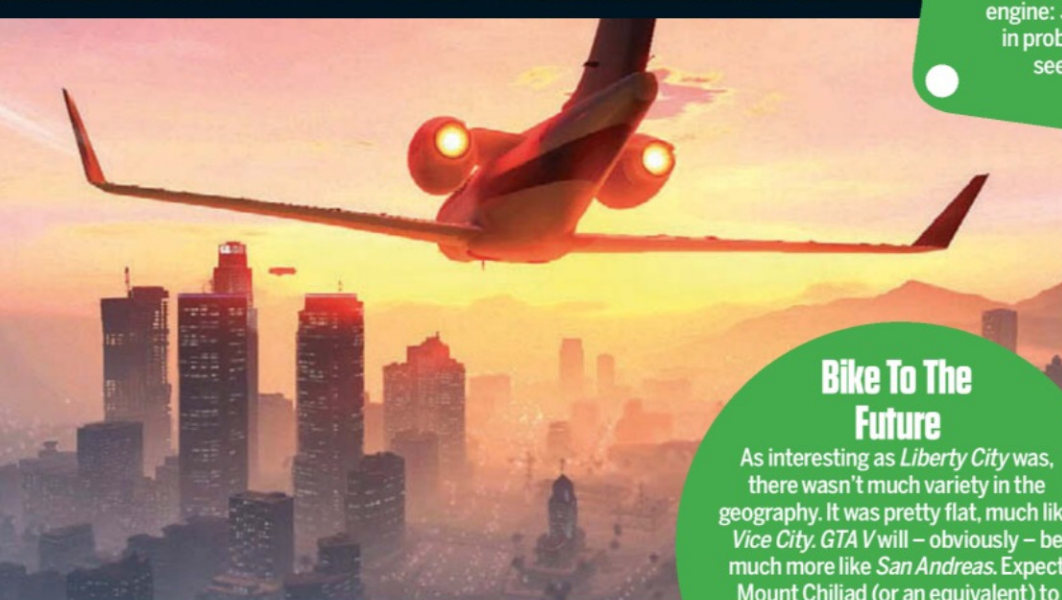
What the GTA V screenshots tell us about the game, the engine, and the infinite possibilities for Rockstar to explore

Jump (jet) Around

Finally, fixed wing aircraft are back. And not just one type: there are bi-planes, Lear Jets and, of course, the fighter jet that we missed so much in *GTA IV*. Being able to tear around at hundreds of miles an hour brings with it an interesting challenge for Rockstar and its engine: *San Andreas* had savage pop-in problems, and we're not keen to see the same repeated here.

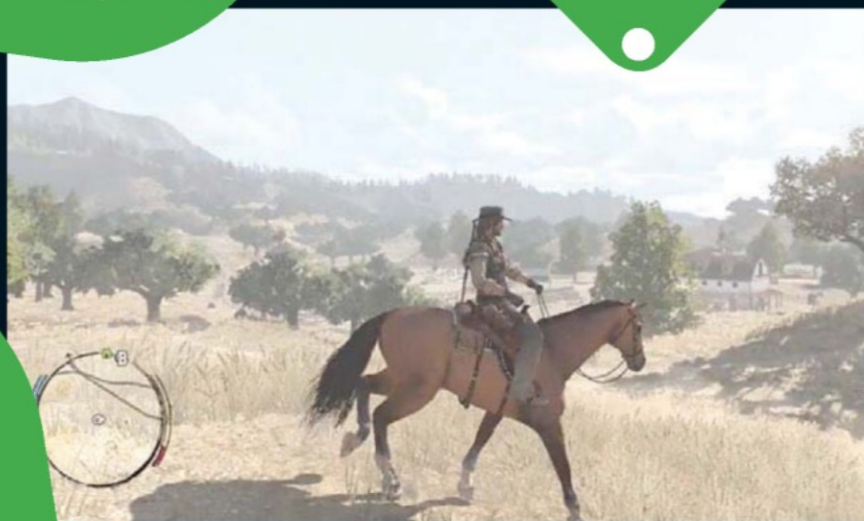
World In Motion

Rockstar proved that it could create stunning urban environments with *GTA IV*, but it was only when *Red Dead Redemption* came out that we started to get excited about *GTA V*. Showcasing how RAGE could power the sprawling countryside environments that are integral to *San Andreas*, expect *GTA V* to marry these strengths perfectly. Rockstar has called *GTA V* its biggest game ever...



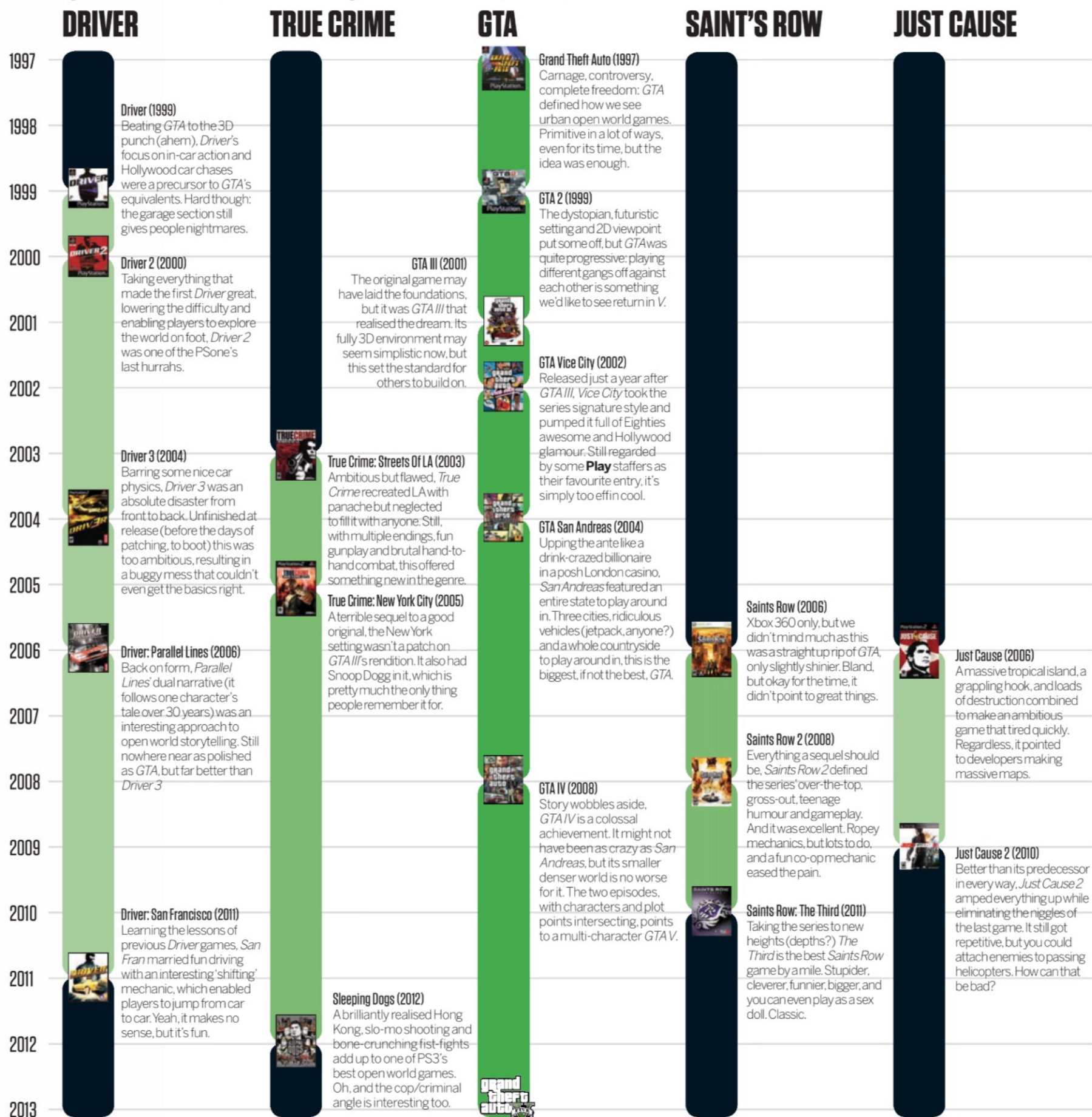
Bike To The Future

As interesting as *Liberty City* was, there wasn't much variety in the geography. It was pretty flat, much like *Vice City*. *GTA V* will – obviously – be much more like *San Andreas*. Expect Mount Chiliad (or an equivalent) to return, and for the whole topography of the map to range from low flats to huge mountain ranges, again recalling *Red Dead Redemption*.



A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Like Doom and Street Fighter II before it, GTA was so successful that it inspired a sea of sequels, rivals, and imitators. Alongside that series, here are the games that tried, failed, and in some senses even bettered Rockstar's classics...





Who's that in the jet? Squint hard and it looks like Frank West, right?

> was putting forward, was make a game smaller, and make it cheaper. If a game is a third the size, it can surely be a third the price. *GTA* levels are so huge, that one third the size is still pretty large. And who then wouldn't pay £15 for it? What gets me, is that they would actually make *more* money from it!

"Take three *GTA* levels. Each person that buys *GTA* would probably buy each of the three levels as a separate game – because they would now get to see all the levels. But at £15, that's £45 they'll make, not the £35-£40 that it currently sells for. Would the public feel ripped off? No... because they get to actually *play* this content, not just dream of getting past that locked gate on the first world, guarded by some boss that they can never beat.

"I'm pleased to say other games already do this! Both social and mobile games make smaller games, then *if* they do well, they add more content, much of which is available via an in-app purchase. This means they don't waste time and money making content 80% of their public never sees."

GTA V is unlikely to see this advice put into practice: Rockstar has always strived to provide bigger and better worlds as the hardware generations wear on. And we can't see people being happy to keep having to pay more to get a 'whole' game. But we

do anticipate the lessons that were learned from *GTA IV* – particularly its multi-narrative structure when combined with the *Episodes From Liberty City* – to have some effect on *V*. The original trailer seems to intimate that there will be three different playable characters, as do the new screenshots.

Multiplayer, too, could be a huge area of expansion for Rockstar. *Saints Row*'s co-op campaigns may not have changed much of the template, but it didn't matter: players could create their own deviations, most of them hilarious. Will *GTA* feature a three player co-op equivalent? Or possibly go even further? The ability to broker deals with rival players via money as well as bullets?

We hope so: persistent multiplayer that affects the world itself could be the next big thing: taking the design out of the hands of the developers and putting it into the players! Short of breaking into Rockstar North we won't know what the company has planned until the next trailer makes its bow. What is almost certain is that any changes that *GTA V* does make – and it certainly needs to make some – will be reflected across its competitors, just like before.

"It's hard to escape *GTA*, since they did it first," Adams states. "I think *GTA V* will set the bar on lots of things but I also think [it's still] going to be *GTA*." ☒

ROCKSTAR'S RECENT HISTORY

There may have only been one *GTA* title this generation (until *V*, of course) but Rockstar's been far from lazy. Between *GTA IV*, *Table Tennis*, *Red Dead Redemption* and *LA Noire*, it has created new experiences that are going to pave the way for *GTA V*...



ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS TABLE TENNIS

Not the most glamorous of games, but an important test for Rockstar's then-new game engine, *RAGE*. *Table Tennis* caused a bit of head scratching on release – a lot of people reasonably enquired as to where the new *GTA* was, and how they were going to shoot hookers in a *table tennis* game – but it was here that Rockstar proved that it had the technology, especially the physics, for *GTA IV*.

It's not available on PS3, being limited to an Xbox 360 and Wii release, but you're not missing out on anything other than owning a fun tech demo for better things to come.



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Either the greatest game in the world or a no-fun slap in the face of the series, depending on who you're talking to and whether they've taken their meds that day. *GTA IV* is a masterpiece of world building: Rockstar made New York, and put it on a tiny disc for you. How can that be a bad thing?

Not that there weren't some legitimate grumbles, ones that Rockstar appears to have learned from. Niko Bellic was an interesting character, but his moral code stood firmly against the wanton destruction the series encouraged. That looks to change in *GTA V*: the two *Episodes From Liberty City* saw a return to out and out lawlessness, and we're certain that the three interlocking stories of the *GTA IV* will form the basis of a multi-character *GTA V*.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Although not developed by Rockstar North, the San Diego team's achievement is nevertheless at least on a par with its more illustrious brothers. *Red Dead* is one of the finest games of this generation, with a world that puts everything else not created by Rockstar to shame.

The death of the old west may have been the game's overriding theme, but *Red Dead*'s endless, diverse deserts and countryside will live on as the connecting tissue in *GTA V*. Think *San Andreas* was impressive? Wait until you see how *Red Dead*'s tech ties the urban areas of *GTA V* together.



LA NOIRE

Another controversial game from Rockstar, another influence on *GTA V*. In development for roughly 200 years (approx.) *LA Noire* languished before Rockstar helped finish it. The game's impressive facial technology was the highlight – and something we expect to see modified and included in the next *GTA* –

but it was also the period setting and detective work that really drew people in. Interrogation logic may have been spotty, but expect that to be fixed and used, albeit sparingly, in *GTA V*.



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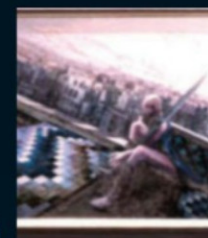


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Need To Know



New Final Fantasy announced

Square-Enix has announced *Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII*, which sees Lightning roaming a new area called Novus Partus. Set 100 years after the events of *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, the key gameplay mechanic is a doomsday counter that ticks down throughout.



VITA COMEBACK PLAN

SONY IS GIVING ITS HANDHELD A HUGE, MAKE-OR-BREAK SECOND CHANCE, SPEARHEADED BY SOME HUGE, GAME-CHANGING INITIATIVES. IS THIS WHAT VITA NEEDS?

It was forgotten at E3, but by gamescom Sony had pulled its thumb out and remembered its black sheep: PS Vita is getting a second chance to thrive.

It's not through a simple price drop, like many of us expected, but a series of features, updates, incentives and innovations that work together to tempt us into parting with our cash far more than just knocking £50 off the price would do.

But first, the bad news: Vita is not selling very well. By this point in the lifetime of PSP it had sold 5.05 million units, while the 'underperforming' Nintendo 3DS had sold 6.68 million units. Sony's latest has just scraped beyond 2.2 million in that period of time.

It's not a number to sniff at, sure, but it's difficult to remain too positive when

faced with the cold, hard numbers. So here's where the good news comes in: Sony realises it needs to do something to fix matters. And Sony is doing a lot to make sure things do indeed get fixed. Firmware updates are something often joked about by those on either side of Sony fandom, but the company is using them to make the Vita far more than it ever was on launch. Version 1.80 added PSone compatibility along with cross-control, which makes Vita like a better version of the Wii U tablet controller before Nintendo has even had the chance to bring that bad boy to market.

There's been more focus placed on the cross-buy scheme and clarification

in the most important facet of the games that can be played on PS3 then your progress transferred to Vita in order to continue (and vice-versa): participating games will be 'pay once, get both'. Buy *PlayStation All-Stars*

“There's been more focus placed on the cross-buy scheme and clarification in the most important facet of the games that can be played on PS3 then your progress transferred to Vita in order to continue”

Battle Royale on PS3, get the PS Vita version thrown in at no extra cost. Pick up *Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time* on the big boy console, get the little portable version free of charge. It isn't as huge a focus as we hoped – Sony simply can't

get every studio to make a Vita version of their games alongside a PS3 version – but it is a fantastic incentive, simply pushing free versions of games onto people who would probably have gone to buy them anyway.

Then there are the games: *Tearaway*, *Wonderbook* (no, really), *LittleBigPlanet*, *Killzone Mercenary*, *Call Of Duty Black*

Ops: Declassified, *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* and the aforementioned cross-buy titles – among many others – mean Vita's second chance is something we can all look forward to. The future's bright, it seems.

IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS



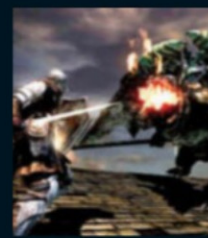
Assassin's Creed III multiplayer with storyline unlocks

An idea that started with *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*, it'll carry on with *ACIII*; levelling up will see you unlock files to do with the story. Monthly challenges have also been promised.



Brothers In Arms: Furious 4 is dead

Well, sort of. The game you knew as *Brothers In Arms: Furious 4* is no more. After accepting it doesn't really fit with the *BIA* series, Gearbox will drop that part of the name and re-evaluate it as its own IP. News of the brand new title is expected soon.



Dark Souls gets easy?

"I am thinking about whether I should prepare another difficulty that everyone can complete," said Hidetaka Miyazaki, *Dark Souls* director, reflecting on its success. "However, I suppose gamers do not particularly prefer easy games. What they want is interesting and worthwhile games to play."

MORE VITA...

CROSS-CONTROLLER

Use Vita to control games on your PS3. The most intriguing idea here, such as the way touchscreen makes it easier to create levels in *LittleBigPlanet 2*



LittleBigPlanet 2
Dust 514 (app)

PlayStation
All-Stars
Battle Royale
Guacamelee

Zen Pinball 2
Sly Cooper:
Thieves In Time
Ratchet & Clank:
QForce
Warrior's Lair
Retro City
Rampage

CROSS-PLAY

Players on both platforms can play each other. Makes sense when games don't have visually intense multiplayer, such as these confirmed titles

Street Fighter X Tekken
Everybody's Golf
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee HD
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection

CROSS-BUY

Buy it on one platform, get it for the other. Much in the same way the film industry has triple pack editions with DVD, Blu-Ray and digital downloads

Need For Speed: Most Wanted (maybe)
Sound Shapes

NO CROSS

FIFA 13
Tearaway
Jet Set Radio HD
Killzone: Mercenary
New Little King's Story
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation
Call Of Duty Black Ops: Declassified
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed



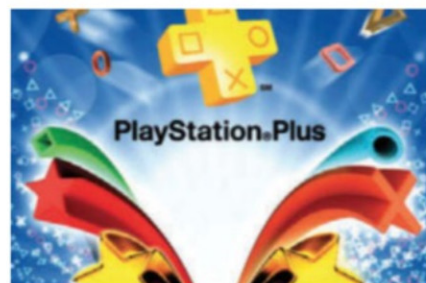
THE GAMES

The games are the most important thing about a gaming device, odd as that may seem, so it's good to see Sony aggressively pushing established 'name' series like *Call Of Duty Black Ops: Declassified*, *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation*, *Killzone Mercenary*, *Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time* and *LittleBigPlanet*, among many others. Then there's the emphasis on new, creative and inventive IP like the fantastic-looking *Tearaway* and – much as we've laughed at it in the past – *Wonderbook*. Every base is covered.



THE MARKETING

There's no price cut to speak of, which might keep some people at arm's length from Vita. So it's no surprise to see some proper, official bundles making their way to market to help push the handheld into people's... umm... hands. *LittleBigPlanet*, *FIFA 13*, *Black Ops: Declassified* and *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale* will all be getting proper, branded bundles packaged together to make you want to buy a Vita. There's also Sony's latter-year marketing campaign too, which will be pushing the machine everywhere.



THE PLUS

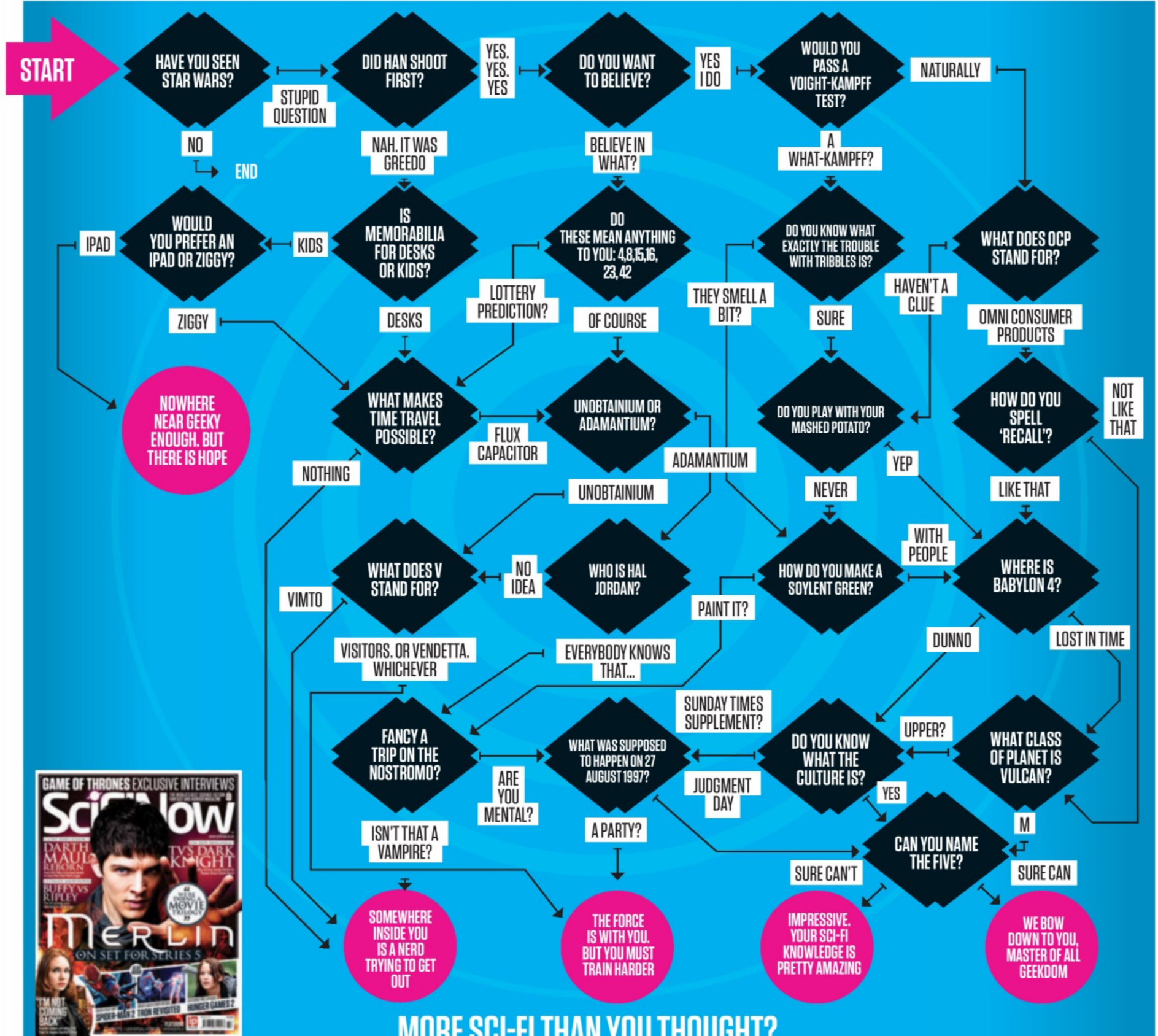
PlayStation Plus has gone from being a luxury that we would hardly recommend even if you had spare money to one of the most essential services on any console we can think of. Frankly, it's started to put Xbox Live Gold to shame with its plethora of freebies and incentives. And the best part? It's coming to Vita. This means free games, discounts, betas, demos and everything else that makes PS Plus such a good service, but now on the portable too. Bliss.



THE CROSS-INCENTIVE

The crossover incentives are being pushed increasingly, though aren't as much of a focus as we might have expected. Still, the cross-controller function (using the Vita as a controller for a PS3 game, like the Wii U tablet but with more functionality), cross-play system (play on PS3, transfer save to Vita, continue) and cross-buy incentive (buy it on PS3, get it on Vita for free) will be incredible, even if they are only used in a limited fashion.

Use the **SciFiNow** flowchart to find out...



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THE REAL-LIFE

According to her Twitter bio, Megan Turney is a lady, nerd, cosplayer, gamer, deviantArt admin, nerdy pillow maker, rebel princess and model gundam enthusiast. More importantly, she also makes for a damn good Borderlands Psycho...

BORDERLANDS PSYCHO BANDIT

“Borderlands is easily one of my favourite games in recent memory. I played it a ton when it came out and loved every minute of it”

“He explained he drew hentai and that he'd love to have me go to his room and pose for him”



Why cosplay as a Borderlands Psycho?

Borderlands is easily one of my favourite games in recent memory. I played it a ton when it came out and loved every minute of it, so when I was invited to be in a "Videogame guys as girls" group, I knew I wanted to do something from Borderlands.

Did people generally recognise the character when you did the cosplay?

A lot of people thought I was a "battle-damaged Chell" from Portal. For the people who did get it, they were so excited, but I think I heard people call me "Portal Girl" no less than 50 times that day. Instead of being disappointed, I just got way more excited when someone did shout "Borderlands!"

What's the best comment you've had about your Borderlands cosplay?

A friend of mine knows some of the guys over at Gearbox and showed them my costume – I'm not sure what their exact words were, but they loved it and that was beyond exciting for me.

What's the strangest anecdote you have about any of the cosplays you've done so far?

Oh goodness, I have a few, but this one happened long, long ago at A-Kon 13. A guy walked up to me and introduced himself. He seemed fairly nice, a little older – maybe in his 40s or so – and told me he was an artist. He explained that he drew exclusively hentai and that he'd love to have me go to his room and pose for him. When I told him I was fifteen, he quietly said, "Please don't tell anyone we talked," and walked right out of the convention. It was a quite a way to start my cosplay career.

What's next on the cosplay list? Do you have any of the Borderlands 2 characters in mind?

Right now, I'm actually working on a Lilith costume. She's an NPC in Borderlands 2, so it still counts, right? I've also been thinking of upgrading my Psycho costume to match the Borderlands 2 cover, but that'll be some time in the future.

facebook
facebook.com/PlayMagUK

If Ubisoft get it right, it just might be an *Assassin's Creed III* beater. I'm amped to give it a go.

BRADLEY ALEXANDER FISHER

I don't understand how they can turn this into a game... I mean, I enjoy the programme, but there's not much of a plot. I guess Anne Robinson will be the main character, but will Nicky Campbell be unlockable later on?

JAMES SEBER

Watch Dogs might be the most ambitious open world game of this generation. Never have I seen so much sophistication crafted in one demo. Simply masterful!

MITCHELL SABBAG

Damn! It looks amazing!! I've seen the vid three times now and it's got an *Assassin's Creed/Deus Ex* vibe to it.

TONY WATSON SKELTON

I think it looks amazing and its an idea that doesn't get used often in games either. Doubt it will be a let-down because of the hype, since everyone's seen the gameplay footage, but they still have plenty of time to iron out any bugs that the game may have.

KEVIN WILLIAM SMITH

It looks like a mixture of *Assassin's Creed* and *Deus Ex* with something new thrown in... I'm quite excited about it!

COL CARNEY

YouTube
youtube.com/PlayMagUK

I HATE the way they promote games on PC, then you see the console version, same as they did on *BF3*; this game looks too good to be true for us console owners.

MOHAMED ABDULLAH

This game is going to die when *GTA V* arrives.

KICKBUTTOWSKI6

Black Ops 2, *Assassin's Creed 3*, *Watch Dogs*, *The Last of Us*, *MGS Rising*, *GTA V*, *Resident Evil 6*, *Far Cry 3*, *God of War: Ascension*... lol, I guess I'm going to be broke next summer.

SEARCHINGCURIOUS

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@PAUL_BOWLER

If *Watch Dogs* plays as good as it looks, it'll be amazing! Really looking forward to this game.

@SIONLLJ

I know it looks amazing but I myself wasn't blown away by it. I also don't really understand how multiplayer will be implemented.

@MCKKIRK

The demo looked very scripted for a sandbox game. Also why cause a car pile-up intentionally and then help someone whose life you've just destroyed?

@KITTLE11

I want to know what it'll look like on consoles.

@INSOMNIAC

The whole gameplay and environment elements were stunning. I need a time machine so I can play this now.

@C1892J

It reminds me of that ginger goddess from *Watchdog*, Anne Robinson, OM NOM NOM.

@JAKESINNOTT

Watch Dogs looks amazing. It sort of reminds me of *Assassin's Creed*...

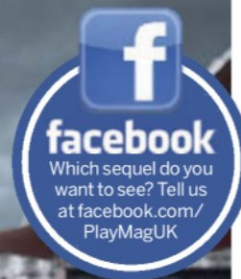
Play Online

Want your voice to be heard? Then scream louder at facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK, youtube.com/PlayMagUK and [@PlayMag_UK](https://twitter.com/PlayMag_UK), where we hang out when not doing work (ie. all the time)

YOUR SHOUT

Play readers have their say

WATCH DOGS

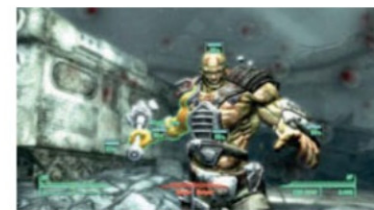


WHAT ABOUT THESE SEQUELS?



PREY 2

It was rumoured to be cancelled, then it was revealed to be delayed as 'development had not progressed satisfactorily this past year', now it has disappeared from Bethesda's product page. It's a troubled project, this one. Will we ever get to play it?



FALLOUT 4

The rumour mill stirred into life when someone claiming to be connected with *Fallout 4* said it will be set in Boston, with a strong connection to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It could be set in Barnet for all we care. We just want it to happen.



TIMESPLITTERS 4

"If you want *TimeSplitters 4*, let me know!" shouted Cevat Yerli, CEO of current *TimeSplitters* IP owner. So we shouted. And we screamed. And we signed petitions in our blood. "Not high enough yet!" he said. Oh. Sigh. Why did you say that thing then, Yerli?



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

"We don't rush to make sequels but that does not mean that we won't get to them eventually," says Rockstar. "Stay tuned for further announcements about the future of the *Red Dead* series." Given how *Red Dead* ended, and its sales, it's a question of when, not if.



SHENMUE III

With creator Yu Suzuki now 54 years old and Sega's financial woes forcing them towards a digital-only strategy, the chances of *Shenmue III* ever happening went from 0.005% to MEGA LULZ.

IT'S COMING

DRAGON AGE III

EA sends out surveys that leak key details of BioWare's RPG. It's an open secret that the developers have been working on it for a while now, so what can we expect?

1 HORDES OF DEMONS

The story sees us take a look at the kingdom of Ferelden after it was savaged by the Darkspawn decades ago. The Templar believe the church needs to become stricter with policing the power of the mages, while they in turn are concerned the Templar have become too zealous. With civil war and corruption threatening to tear the land apart, it's up to you to reunite the land. You can do this by engaging in political war, making friends, gathering armies, sending spies and so on. The choice is yours. Will this be the setting for *Dragon Age III*? Thematically, it fits and it could bring bold new gameplay decisions to the fore.

2 ONLINE, CO-OP, TEN COMPANIONS

We couldn't think of a more compelling header than 'lots of people' but that's basically what this will be. Lots of people. You can play as a rogue, warrior or mage while you can bring up to ten companions along in your crew. There are also swirling rumours of an online or co-op mode, which isn't that surprising given BioWare has already branched out in that direction with the *Mass Effect* series while under EA's banner.

3 A SUBTITLE NOBODY LIKES

One of the questions in the survey asked users to rate *Dragon Age III: The Breach* as a title out of five, before listing *Exarch*, *Inquisition*, *Inquisitor* and *Apocrypha* as other potential subtitles. We're not sure it'll be called any of those, given they either sound like German RPG subtitles or Pot Noodle ingredients. Here's a good title you can use, BioWare: why don't you call it *Dragon Age III*?

4 AN ENDING EVERYONE LIKES

Although it's unlikely we'll hear what happened to *Mass Effect 3* to derail its ending from its intended path and towards Spacechild suddenly appearing, it is likely that BioWare will have learnt its lesson for *Dragon Age III*. Gameplay-wise, the only other rumours concern minor mechanics – special finishing moves, four companions at any time, and so on – so the big emphasis is on wrapping up the series in a manner that please fans, something *Mass Effect* failed at in its final few minutes.





CAN SOMEONE, AT some point, stop announcing games so bloody early? Whether it be a mistake, over-exuberance, idiocy or a misplaced sense of confidence, we're always hearing about the Next Big Thing – four years before it comes out.

Kazunori Yamauchi mentioned *Gran Turismo 6* quite recently, confirming its existence but refusing to say when the game will be coming out. He's been burned before with the constant delays and expectations placed on a developer when it announces a date for a project. Oh, you people do know how to complain a lot.

EA mentioned, then deleted the mention, then confirmed the mention of *Battlefield 4* as a bonus to *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter* purchasers. Why? Why do that? *Battlefield 3* still has a lot of life left in it – you've confused people. Worse still, you've annoyed me. The game won't be out for an age. Why bother mentioning it?

The Last Guardian and *Half-Life: Episode 3* both exist (apparently, in the latter's case), but where are they? We've been waiting forever and it's getting annoying. At first it was hype, then it was hope, now it's just a dull ache in my soul that gets a little bit irritated when I think about these games and how instead of wondering where they are, I could just be sat playing and enjoying something else in blissful ignorance.

But it's how things have to be. It's how companies have to operate. It's a big part of our business, the whole hype for the new games thing.

I want to propose a radical change to how hype operates – to how the marketers tick their boxes. Announce a game is coming out at the end of *that* week. Imagine if Rockstar was to release a trailer for *Grand Theft Auto V* that ended with the words "Out this Friday". The internets would explode, the hype would be phenomenal and, at the end of *that very same week*, the game would be out while people were still in a frenzy.

Alright, so I'm not a marketing expert. In fact, I'm a bit of an idiot. I understand the notion of building a strong foundation of support for a product – a game, in this case – over a long period of time. But it's tiring to always be looking forward to the next big thing. It's tiring to have a game announced, or just mentioned, and have to wait years for it to show.

And I'm tired of looking so far ahead. So tired. I've been waiting for *Aliens: Colonial Marines* since it was announced (admittedly, under an entirely different developer) in 2001. I've waited so long. I just want to sleep. Sigh.

ALIENS

COLONIAL MARINES

COMING IN 10 YEARS TIME!

“Imagine if Rockstar was to release a trailer for *Grand Theft Auto V* that ended with the words “Out this Friday”. The internets would explode”





AA

Replacing the verging-on-abysmal Road To Wrestlemania with the Attitude mode – which charts the WWE's trails through the mid Nineties to the early Noughties (i.e. when it was must-see TV) – is a good idea. But it's a nostalgia pang over anything else, so it'll be interesting to see what Yuke's adds to it.

OH MY GOD

Named after the trademark cry of Joey 'Stocky Balboa' Styles, OMG! mode sees those marquee stunts you've seen on TV recreated in the game. Meaning you get to see the ring breaking, or barricades breaking, or all of the other stuff you saw first time around when it was on TV.

KID DYNAMITE

Some call him The Baddest Man On The Planet, but we're just not sure why Tyson is even included in WWE '13. Sure, he had something of an impact during his brief couple of appearances in the Attitude era, but it's a bit grasping to feature him as an actual playable character. But hey – anything for publicity, right?

PREDATOR 2

The Predator Engine has been upgraded for WWE '13, meaning the physics supporting everything in the game will be better than last year. That's about all we can say on that, to be honest. We had to sit through a presentation on tables breaking the other year. Seriously. It'll make the game better, we'd hope.

SLOBBERKNOCKIN'

Now this is an area we're looking forward to: sound has been re-done, with recordings of real crowds taken, and commentary totally revamped to make it less like the horrible mess it has been since it was introduced back in the Smackdown days. It surely can't be anything worse than it was, can it?

WWE '13

WWE: the place to be? As you'll see, we're not quite sure...ee

SUPER(B) STAR CREATION

Superstar creation tools are being iterated on, made that bit better and generally tinkered with. Seeing as one of WWE '12's best features was the ability to share created elements online, it's great to see Yuke's continuing the trend. Look out for Play's version of Bastion Booger within a week of the game's launch.

EXPANDING UNIVERSE

The folks at Yuke's have been reticent to reveal any real new details behind Universe 3.0 – the updated version of the system that sees rivalries and storylines carried out in an organic fashion based on how you play the game. Hopefully it will add something of note though, as the feature has been relegated to the backlines since its inception.

FLIP-REVERSE IT

WWE '13 will see more dynamic systems attributed to moves, finishers, reversals and so on. Catching a high-cross body block and turning it into a GTS looks, on video, to be a gift from Thor himself. But how will it function in-game? How prescribed and automatic will it be? We're hoping for dynamic, not automated.

5 WAYS WWE '13 COULD REIGN AS CHAMPION

The WWE/Smackdown Vs Raw/Smackdown series has had a rough ride in recent years, suffering from feature creep and a real lack of anything approaching innovation. But we don't want it to be like this – we want a wrestling game we can really love. Here are five examples, culled from previous entries to the series, that would help WWE '13 immeasurably.

MORE TECHNICAL GRAPPLING

Smackdown: Here Comes The Pain hit the sweet spot between complex yet easy to pick up grappling controls. Deep and satisfying, yet still remained open to newcomers – brilliant.



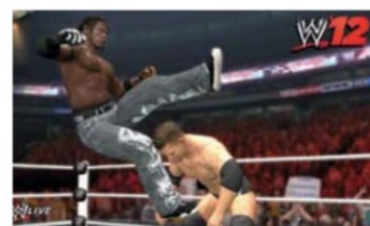
FOUR-PLAYER, ENDLESS SEASON MODE

Smackdown 2's season mode wasn't in-depth with its storylines, but it was four-player compatible and went on indefinitely. It was raucous fun as a result.



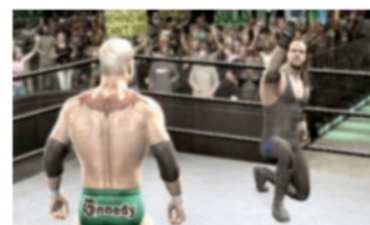
REVERSALS ON MORE THAN ONE BUTTON

Simplifying reversals to one button is an invitation to let button-spamming idiots get the upper hand. This must not be allowed to continue. It should be reverted to the pre-WWE '12 standard.



LESS ABOUT MIMICKING TV, MORE ABOUT FUN

There's nothing wrong with imitating the spectacle of a live WWE event – but when it comes at the cost of player interaction and fun, well, you end up with WWE '12.



A YEAR'S BREAK

Alright, so this has never been on a WWE game, but we've had 14 of them in 12 years. That's too much. Give the folks at Yuke's a year's extra development time. Please.

READY FOR ESPORTS

ESports are the future. They just are. They are already big, and they're only going to get bigger. Don't believe us? You're wrong not to, seriously. As such, we thought about five currently-existing(ish) games that are already pretty much perfect for the world of eSports. Some are already used, actually.



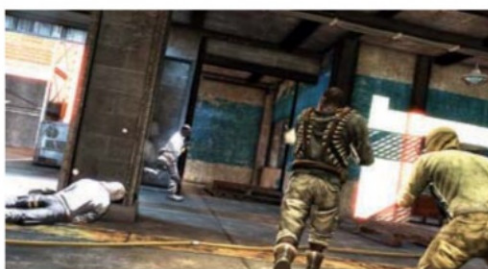
5 GRAN TURISMO 5
What's more exciting than motorsports on TV? Well, most things. Also, playing them yourself. As such, do it with *Gran Turismo 5* – the full set-up, wheel and seat and all – and watch as the joy of motoreSports really shines through. And if it doesn't, blame Jeremy Clarkson or something.



3 VIRTUA FIGHTER 5: FINAL SHOWDOWN
Apparently this is some kind of highly technical fighter that is used the world over in tournaments to see who is the best at throwing down fists (and feet [and throws]). We know how to punch, and once we even dodged! We are not tournament standard.



4 FIFA/PES
Just to avoid any arguments or whining we've gone for an either/or situation here. Pick one. Picked one? Good. Stick with it. Standardised rules, team selection policies, limits on how many STUPID CHEAP GOALS you can score: *FIFA/PES* are perfect for eSports. Funny, what with them being real sports.



2 UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION
There might be some balancing issues with certain weapons, and there would likely have to be some solution to the aiming standards, but generally speaking, *Uncharted 3* would be great for eSports. Plus, someone winning a prize as Sully would be the best of the things.



1 CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II
This is slightly presumptuous on our part, sure, but all the signs are pointing towards *Black Ops II* being a game that will very much hit the ground running when it comes to eSports. Built-in streaming is the big one, meaning anyone is able to show the world their matches as they happen.



TEAM PICKS Our own eSports picks



STEVE PES 2013
Because it's the best. Because it's the purest. [Steve was supposed to say more, but at this point he just looked out the window, dreaming of a better life.]



RYAN CAPCOM VS SNK 2
True story. I was one of the best in Europe at this game. Finished third in a European tournament! Won money and stuff. Bring it back. I miss games I'm good at! And money.



IAN PARAPPA THE RAPPER
Battle-rapping is something I have a peculiar love for watching on YouTube, so why not make it an eSport via the joy that is *PaRappa*? I'd be up for competing.



ANDY DAYZ
40 survivors enter Chernarus, last one standing is the winner. A real test of endurance, lasting days or even weeks as players battle zombies and each other to win!

ANATOMY OF... JODIE HOLMES

The lead character in Quantic Dream's latest triumph of technology and ambition*, *Beyond: Two Souls*, is one Jodie Holmes. She might look familiar, but it doesn't stop at name talent being attached – there's more to this character. *It's a reasonable assumption

WHO SOULS?

Players will take control of Jodie Holmes, played by Ellen Page (in case you haven't been told that enough times), as she goes on a journey of discovery. Being followed around everywhere by a ghostly apparition – see below – is the sort of thing that will leave you with questions, so it's understandable Jodie goes on this quest for knowledge. The story will take in 15 years of her life, from family life as an adolescent and through to that point where you're about to hit 30 and have no idea what you're doing with your life. Not that we'd know anything about that.

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL

Jodie is moving back in the direction of the supernatural, as is clear by her ghostly chum and all those afterlife shenanigans we're hearing about. This is a return to type for a lead character in a David Cage game, as we skipped over the whole 'flying Mayan priests battling AI aliens while your now-dead lead character gets a woman pregnant somehow' thing after *Fahrenheit's* misadventures with Lucas Kane. And let's not forget the Bowie-inspired madness of Kay'l and co in *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*. It's good to be back in familiar (mad) territory.

BUMP IN THE NIGHT

Jodie has with her a ghostly companion by the name of Aiden – he's always been there, apparently, and we're sure the story will let the player find out just why. But that's for another, more spoilery time. What we do know is Mr Apparition is capable of making a nuisance of himself, aiding (LIKE HIS NAME, nearly) Jodie by providing things like force fields and possessing people, allowing them to be controlled. Some might call this an in-game mechanic dressed up as a character, and who are we to disagree? Still sounds interesting, though.

ACTING BOT 942

All of *Beyond's* action has been performance-captured this time around, rather than the increasingly-clumsy-looking method of standard motion capture. What this means is, like *Uncharted's* cut-scenes, *Beyond* has far better-looking cinematic sequences than other games. What it also means is there are lots of videos out there with people dressed in unflattering lycra bodysuits and little balls stuck all over their faces. This does mean, at the very least, Jodie and the other characters in *Beyond* won't look like trees with glass eyes acting badly, as they might have possibly done in *Heavy Rain*.

SHE'S IN FILMS, YOU KNOW?

Apparently this Page woman who plays Holmes is in films too, so let's talk about those films she's in because why not, eh?



INCEPTION

The movie you either understand perfectly or don't (probably because you're a bit dim) saw Page in a starring role in a super-popular blockbuster. She played a young, sassy woman alongside Leo DiCaprio's older, less sassy man.



JUNO

Juno, that hipster teen pregnancy film, was the movie that shot Page into the public eye and introduced many to her sassified brand of sass. She played a young, sassy woman alongside J.K. Simmons' older, less sassy man.



WHIP IT

Whip It is to blame for the hundreds of roller derby clubs that have popped up all over the country. Oh, and it was actually a decently entertaining film, too. Page played a young, sassy woman alongside Drew Barrymore's older, less sassy woman.



HARD CANDY

Hard Candy is a great film, and if you haven't seen it, you should, but it's one that will make you feel very wrong for many reasons – especially considering how good Page is in it. She plays a young, sassy girl alongside Patrick Wilson's older, less sassy man.



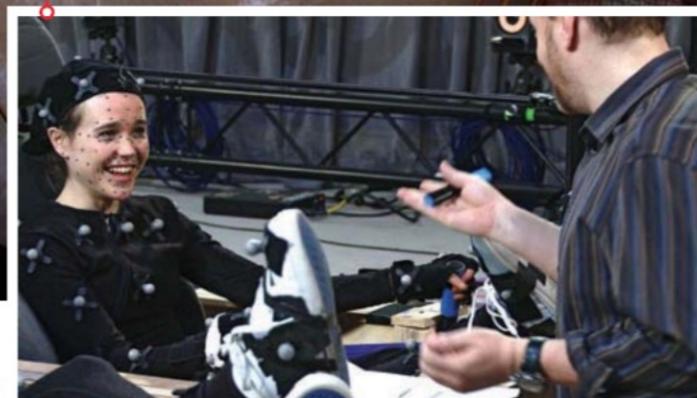
SUPER

Super, made by Lollipop Chainsaw's James Gunn, is a very dark tale on the usual superhero trope. It's also quite funny. You should probably see this one too. Page plays a young, sassy woman alongside Rainn Wilson's older, relatively less sassy man.



X-MEN: THE LAST STAND

Otherwise known as 'when we realised *X-Men* films had gone rubbish', Page took the role of Kitty Pryde – enough of a role to be on the posters. She plays a young, sassy woman alongside Hugh Jackman's older, slightly less sassy mutant.



Re:Play

You are the controller! But only on these pages

What games help you poo? It's these kind of tough issues that Play tackles every month. We're not afraid of anything. Write in about whatever you want. Go on. It's a *challenge*.

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NEED FOR SPEED: THE MOVIE

I have heard that Dreamworks has acquired the rights to a *Need For Speed* movie, and at first I thought it must have been a joke – because who would want to make a film about a load of racing games that basically have no story at all? But the news continued to grow and a couple of weeks ago I read an interview with the guy that is making it and he said that he wants to include a bit of every *NFS* game in the film. Not only would the film not make any sense, but does he not know how many games there are in that series? What's your opinion?

Dan Underwood



The *Fast And The Furious* series does okay business and it doesn't really have a story based on anything bar who-has-the-most-turbo-buttons-to-press, so a *Need For Speed* movie makes sense in that it doesn't need much story. Also, it's not that unusual for a film to be run by someone with no interest in games Mike Newell, the *Prince Of Persia* director, said that games bore him and he wasn't any good at *Prince Of Persia*. Still though, does anyone care about a *Need For Speed* movie? Really? Where's the *Tokyo Jungle* movie?



GAMES THAT HELP YOU POO

So people say video games are bad for you. I disagree. Health experts say you need five a day of fruit and veg. Well I think video games can provide a different five a day. To start with, games like *Uncharted 2* and *3* are action-packed and get the adrenaline pumping – cardiovascular. *Portal 1* and *2* make you think, help your brain develop. *Mass Effect 2* and *3* play with your emotions, help your conscience and can create better people, (can have negative effects too). *Journey* can calm you and bring peace, helps you sleep. Finally, for digestion, *Dead Space* helps you poop. Food for thought, really, or should I say games for thought...?

P Jones

We don't know about that, but we do know we eat a lot of Rustler's Burgers while playing games, and Rustlers is a British company, therefore we're helping the British economy. Therefore games are saving Britain! That's how the economy works, right? God damn, we're clever.

THE BIG ISSUE



WHERE'S PS VITA: THE MAGAZINE?

Morning guys. First off, I love your magazine and do not regret my subscription one bit! I was just emailing you to wonder why there is no dedicated magazine in the UK to the Vita. Do you think this is because although the Vita has been out for six months, it hasn't exactly been selling like hot cakes (proud owner since launch day here myself!)? Or do you think it could be that magazine readers are decreasing in numbers due to the increasing prevalence of gaming websites? What do you think?

Andrew Sayce

It's more that gamers rarely just own portable consoles. It was the same with PSP. Think of your average PSP or Vita owner – they're likely to own a PS3, right? While the average PS3 owner probably doesn't own a PSP or Vita. And so, it's common sense to do a magazine that's PS3 first and encompasses Vita rather than the other way round. HOWEVER! If you have any feedback on our Vita coverage and what you'd like us to do – print-wise, video-wise, etc – just write in and let us know. We're always open to change.

YouTube

www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

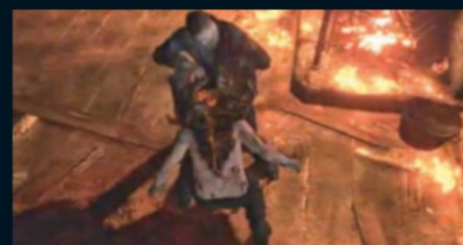
Things you may have missed on our YouTube page



PES 2013
17 GOALS



DISHONORED
THE STUDY OF STEALTH



RESIDENT EVIL 6
JAKE GAMEPLAY



Write in, and win! Every letter we print receives a free game. This month, the prize is the *Special Edition* of *Sleeping Dogs*. If you didn't know, *Sleeping Dogs* is totally fab, words we may have said in our review when we gave it 80%. These people have won that prize. What will you win next month?

STAR LETTER

SONY VS NINTENDO

By now, everyone who has bought a PSVita has probably had their fair share of pleasure (and a little pain) from the little system. And before the release of this Rolls Royce of handhelds, I was looking forward to its complete and utter domination over both Nintendo and Microsoft's consoles, whether handheld or otherwise. But, after six months and the less-than-expected amount of sales and reading a little bit about the games and features, I wasn't entirely sure I wanted one. The thing that really got me was the amount of mandatory gimmicks in the games, like *Uncharted*. I have the perfect example. About three years ago, I was sitting on a bus (I think) with my Nintendo DS. In an effort to keep the sun off the screen, I had it in my lap with the volume off. When I was leaving the bus, a few people were eyeing me suspiciously, and it took me to realise that everyone behind me was watching a weird guy blow loudly into his crotch. Now, I don't know about you, but I don't want people looking at me weirdly every time I take my Vita out because of the gimmicks that put you into awkward positions, because not being able to take it out in public without looking a bit odd sort of defeats the purpose of it being portable at all.

The other thing is the lack of really good games, or new games, for the Vita. I mean, we got *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*, but there is another cheaper, better and more complete version on the PS3. And we have a portable *BioShock* coming after Irrational are finished with *Infinite*, but we will have to wait for about two or three years, and the three definitive and cheaper versions

will already be on the PS3. The only real Vita-exclusive games are *Escape Plan* and *Little Deviants*, and even then they seem more like indie games than retail releases. I will not even scrape the money for a Vita together until we have a portable *Fallout*, a portable *Yakuza*, a portable *Elder Scrolls* and a portable *Hitman*, and there aren't even rumours of any of these games. So there is currently no real reason, in my mind, to have a PSVita at the moment. They are still about \$350 here in Australia, and they offer no real innovative features. They have trophy support, they have messaging to PSN friends and they have more than one analogue stick. They are still dominating the 3DS, but that doesn't mean they are doing exceptionally well and it doesn't mean that everyone should sell their innovative and still brilliant PSPs and all of their games simply for added trophy support and communication with their PSN mates. Chances are, you'll just be playing it at home anyway.

Thomas Davis

Gamecom showed Sony is on the right track with Vita, following its dire E3 outing. You're right that publishers and developers could do more. We had a letter from George Thorne asking why we hadn't done a preview of *BioShock Infinite*, for example. With Irrational not talking about it, not releasing any details and not even releasing a single screenshot, how can we cover it? We want to cover Vita and give it more love but it's a two-way thing that starts with the guys making the games. It's getting better though.

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We take to our Facebook army made up of our nearest and dearest to a....



Best co-op game on PS3?



Play

What's the best co-op game you've played?

Like • Comment • Share • about an hour ago •

DEAN BOOSH-BOOSH WELSH *Resi 5, Guardian Of Light, Dead Island, Borderlands, need I go on?*

CHARLIE DAVIS *Saints Row 3, easy*

JAI PERRY *Borderlands is the best, can't wait for number 2*

STEW SIZER *Portal 2, or Sacred 2*

ANDY JAMES *Borderlands*

DAN HINCHCLIFFE *Dead Nation and Rayman Origins*

ADAM HOBBS *Dungeon Siege*

ROBERT MILES Nothing has really stood out as of yet, but I haven't had a chance to do *Portal 2* yet, probably get some beers in and play it with the girlfriend next chance we get to game

STUART THE-KINSLAYER JOHNSON *Resident Evil 5, Borderlands*



YouTube

Peep the latest trailers and hottest gaming clips at youtube.com/PlayMagUK



DMC
VERGIL TRAILER



SLEEPING DOGS
BOURNEMOUTH NIGHT OUT



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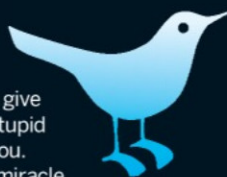
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No seriously, follow us. We give away games, we retweet stupid videos and we *will* talk to you. No seriously, we will. It's a miracle we manage to make a magazine each month



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Play-Mag.co.uk

Opinion, analysis and hilarity can be found on our website www.play-mag.co.uk so join the debate, tell us why we're wrong and make us cry a bit



Forum

Got something to talk about? Tell us on our forum: www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Podcast

The **Play** team talks games every month
nowgamer.com/podcasts/nowgamer-podcasts/



SHOOTING PEOPLE IN THE HEAD

Firstly, I do know that you guys like shooting people in the head, maybe Western people cannot agree with some of the Japanese RPGs. But this is not the case. To begin with, since when did a JRPG (non-FF) get a decent score in the mag? You guys are just being mean. When I saw the video review of *Atelier Meruru*, you guys said 'it's boring' and 'I've seen 40 games exactly like this.' Please have a look at your *COD* collections, since when did FPS get any innovation but **Play** still gives *MW3* a 88%. Also the others, No matter how awful you find *Ar Tonelico* and *Hyperdimension Neptunia*, no way they deserve a 20 something per cent verdict. So dear **Play**: Please be fair to JRPG titles and not be too biased, you upsets RPG fans like me (and few others), maybe

you guys should get someone who really cares about JRPGs to review them. I by no means intend to be nasty, just making some fair and constructive comments. See, useful advice is always harsh. I still love the magazine though.

Mr Kobayashi

The highest scoring non-*Final Fantasy* JRPGs in **Play** are *Resonance Of Fate* (79%), *Eternal Sonata* (87%) and *Valkyria Chronicles* (82%). JRPGs just haven't been as good this gen. Think about previous gens: *Wild Arms*, *Vandal Hearts*, *Xenogears*, *Dark Cloud*, *Suikoden II*, *Shadow Hearts: Covenant*, *Dragon Quest VIII*, *Persona 4*, *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne* and even *Final Fantasy* games VII through to IX. Oh, and we don't like shooting people in the head. Not in this country anyway. It's illegal. Otherwise office arguments would be way too easy to solve.

IT'S MAX PAYNE!

A short and sweet one love the mag i make nealy all my game picks because of you and you have never let me down yet. the weather has been hot so i thought i would get my hair cut but couldnt get ther because i have brokr my leg and have what only be called scaffolding round it so i thort of my matr max payne what do you think see pics. keep up the g
Nathan Taggart

Max Payne never broke his leg though, eh? Still, does anyone out there resemble gaming characters? Look like Nathan Drake? Been compared to Rayman?

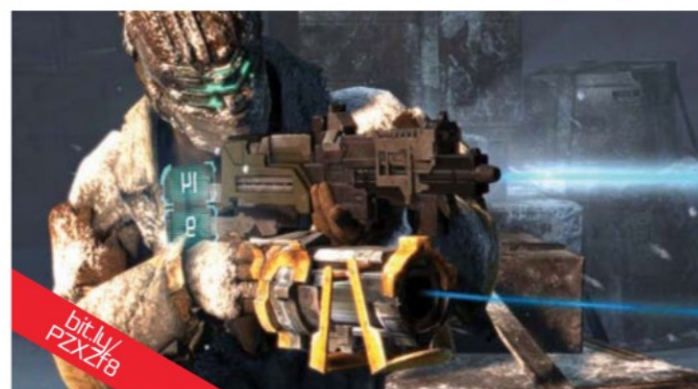


PLAY-MAG.CO.UK

DEAD SPACE 3: NOT 100 HOURS

We can get '100 hours' of play out of *Dead Space 3*, according to the game's developers. But what does this mean? Well, it seems to mean you can put 100 hours into the game if you put 100 hours into it. Yes, that's the level of claims we're working with these days. Sure, it's slapped firmly alongside the idea of spending most of that time weapon crafting and such in the AusGamers' interview with Visceral's Yara Khoury (associate producer), but still – 100 hours! "If you are into weapon crafting, you can spend literally one hundred hours in this thing. If you want to explore all the beta-paths; if you want to replay with the co-op; it's way more about choice in *Dead Space 3*: you can really spend a lot of time doing that." That's it. That's the quote. That's your 100 hours of gaming. 'You will play this game for 100 hours if you play it for 100 hours.' And this is why we get annoyed with interviews. It even includes the most classic of responses:

"I cannot tell you anything right now, but there are very good surprises to come." We're not talking about when *Dead Space 3* comes out right now, but there'll definitely be a release date in future. Oh, who are we kidding. *Dead Space 2* was brilliant. We're really looking forward to *Dead Space 3*.





You ask us questions, we reply on Twitter, then we reply here so everyone else can see, then you ask us more questions. Join in at @PlayMag_UK! Or don't...

@KCALPHA Will this year be the first years that *COD* will start to see a fall in its numbers?

Almost definitely. The numbers stalled last year and we're not convinced everyone has bought into the sci-fi theme of *Black Ops II* yet. We shall see soon enough.

@OONIXYOO What are your thoughts regarding Bethesda's seemingly limitless incompetence when developing for the PS3?

MEGALOL! Because we don't really know what else to say about it really. It is a bit embarrassing though.

@ALKOGNIUZZ If you were able to make a game about anything – any genre, any topic, ANYTHING! What would it be?

A proper detective game. Not like *LA Noire*, one where you spend most of your day at your desk, looking at YouTube videos of dubstep cats, popping out for doughnuts at lunch.

@D3J08 Will there be a *Playboy* Wonderbook edition? Depends how bad sales are, right?

@ZERO_GEEK Community debate – how would YOU reboot the *Final Fantasy* series for the PS4 generation? Characters, genres, style, music..?

Make it like the older ones. Emphasis on exploration and being able to tinker with all those fiddly bits of stats nonsense. And the magic of the older soundtracks too.

@CHOCOBO_SAGE What game's release are you most looking forward too? For me it's still *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance, *BioShock: Infinite*, *Beyond* and *The Last Of Us*.

@HARESANDHALLOWS What is your favourite game soundtrack?

LA Noire and *Mass Effect 3* have the best ones, by far.

@ADAMNARAIN0511 What's the best game to play if you are really sad?

Journey. And *50 Cent: Blood On The Sand*. It's somehow strangely funny in co-op. Honestly. Try it!



THE COMPETITION CORNER

LIMITED EDITION BORDERLANDS 2 TOP TRUMPS

When we write these words, it's when **Play** is at its lowest ebb. Deadline approaches, like the ominous galloping of the four horsemen as night falls, and we cower slightly. Andy's noisy eating becomes louder. Ian's keyboard rattling grows rattling-er. Ryan's phone manner becomes ruder. It is these times that truly test the spirit. It is this spirit that crafts the magazine. It is this magazine that you are holding. **YOU. YOU ARE THE KEY...**



WHICH OF THESE IS A NOTORIOUSLY TOUGH NAMCO BANDAI RPG?

A) DARK SOULS B) PARK SOULS C) PARK LIFE

Pop your answer and address in an email to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject header 'Your words make me cry and tingle in strange places'. Closing date is 27 October 2012. The winner will be notified by email. Next month: something else!

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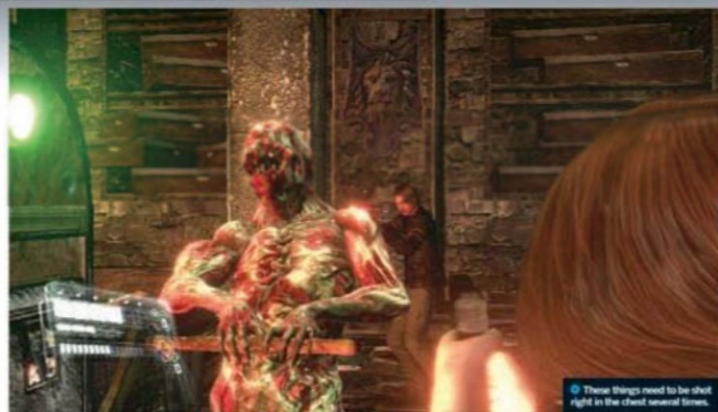


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064 | Play#223

Previously...
in Play

Issue 223
To see only Leon's campaign stand up, the other two are fractured and uninspired.

you have to aim, then push into the wall by aiming, then move to the edge of the wall to see around the corner but you have to stop immediately otherwise Ada spins around.

is cranked up some because you can no longer fall back to the luxury of an extra pair of hands backing up. No partner to spill up the enemy's at-bat, no second gun to

all sorts are thrown in. Given Capcom has recently been slicing up its games into bite-size DLC ribbons - Street Fighter x Tekken deserves its own section on PSN Store for the continuous vomit of DLC spraying from its general direction - Ada Wong's campaign is a surprisingly generous addition. When you consider that each section already weighs in at six to eight hours long, there's a lot of meat on Resident Evil 6's bones. This is before we even take the collectibles, Mercenaries and Agent Hunt into consideration, stretching its life even further.

The inevitable question - is Resident Evil 6 a return to the horror roots of the series? You know the answer already. You knew it when you saw the trailers, heard the interviews, saw the screenshots and we can confirm it now, this isn't a game that will have you cowering behind the sofa in fear. It's an action game with a horror theme. There are some effective jump scares. There are tense moments. However, there isn't anything that really makes you dread what lies ahead. It's a game that has now slipped away from horror territory and into action territory. Your biggest fear is running out of bullets, not running into disfigured creatures.

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you were sweating, then, but you're always aware of how many bullets you have left and the need to think about what you're doing.

What all the sections share in common is the same theme that runs through Resident Evil 6 - this is a brilliant action game, marred only by rough patches where Capcom attempts ideas that don't quite work. It's not the best Resident Evil game but how could it be after Resident Evil 4? Instead, this is arguably the best co-op game available on PlayStation 3 alongside Borderlands 2, and while long-term Resident Evil fans might still be disappointed by the nod towards action over horror, Capcom finally has the confidence and know-how to pull it off. It's big, it's brutal, it's ballsy and most of all, it's back.

Ryan King

VERDICT

Odd rough patch or misfire aside, Resident Evil 6 is bursting with innovation, content and confidence that shows Capcom knows exactly what it's doing with its series. Now fully tooled up for co-op, this feels like a Resident Evil worthy of modern times.

88%

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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



RELEASE DATE: 20 NOVEMBER

Hitman: Absolution

LittleBigHitman?



"This is pretty much oldschool *Hitman*." With those seven little words, IO's Tore Blystad calms **Play's** nerves like a strong drink, or a hard blow to the head. The director and his studio have taken a lot of flak in the run-up to the release of *Hitman Absolution* – linearity, alleged sexism, etc – so it's a relief to be finally talking about the game again, not the shambolic PR campaign. Especially when he's telling us that the game hasn't actually changed that much from earlier instalments.

Going hands-on with the new Contracts mode, Blystad's claims are solid. Early reveals had Agent 47 slaughtering his way through a Chicago library in a manner reminiscent of *Splinter Cell* – seeing through walls, slo-mo, point shooting on what essentially could have been a rail.

It's for this reason that Blystad has used the same level to show off *Hitman's* flexibility. The new Contracts game mode enables players to take any level that they've previously finished and tweak the variables – the target, the parameters for taking them out, what outfit and weapon loadout you'll have to do the job – before putting it out online for their friends to play around with.

"Basically, you can create your own hit. Within any part of the game, in any way that you want. And then send it to your friends, post it online or play it by yourself. Whatever you've unlocked in the game,

you can go back and say 'I want to create a contract within this area.'

"You go back, choose your starting outfit and weapons set. What you want to do, what you want locked, you go in, find targets, take them out how you want to. And whatever you do, it's logged, so if you're seen, then the contract automatically says you cannot make this assignment at Silent Assassin level. Whatever you're doing, you have to prove that it's possible to do it in this fashion. So if you hide all the evidence, then the player playing the level will get a bonus for doing the same thing."

The essence of *Hitman* distilled, in other words. The game has always been about refining your runs, adjusting your hits, and sharing tactics with your friends. Now you can do that all in-game, and compete against each other via friend and global leaderboards. Better yet, the integration with the story aspect of the game will be as pain-free as possible, as Blystad demonstrates.

"So, [take] the library. If I go into the pause menu you can see there's a featured contract. Here's the briefing." [The community decides how long it stays]. "So

now we accept contract, and leave story mode and go into the contract on this level. We were trying to create a seamless feel between story and contracts. So we're back in the game, and there're slight changes, a different target, and what used to be our exit over here, it's not our exit any more. So it changes the level quite a bit. Also, if you go into the objectives, there are bonus objectives: so whoever did it [initially] was not spotted. Everything else, you can do what you want."

Which bodes well for the rest of the game. There's no way the Contracts mode could exist as it stands without the flexibility found in previous *Hitman* titles, and the ability to one-up our friends, or simply make them dress up in ridiculous outfits to get the kill, should make for both excellent competition and hilarious YouTube videos. It's about getting that all-important feeling of community into the game without simply attaching a bog standard multiplayer to it; taking *Hitman* wide, but making sure it's still got the things that made it deep in the first place.

"[Players] know more or less their target audience: you can create it for your friend, and you know they like action, so

it becomes action-orientated, and you know they like humour, so you select the chicken suit. So you're going to murder everyone and send it over to them. They play it better than you, you send it back, 'How did you do it in under two minutes!?'"

"So then it becomes a cool challenge between you two, but then maybe someone else picks it up and thinks it's a cool challenge, and then it gets promoted, and then 100,000 people are playing it."

It's a good idea backed by impressive implementation, and things can only get better from here. Given the right tools, players in other community-focused games have proven that their imaginations outstrip even those of the team that made the game. Add *Hitman's* blend of problem-solving, jet-black humour and open-ended objectives and you've got the potential for huge replayability. *Absolution* finally feels on the right track: now let's just hope that Square doesn't release a trailer with Agent 47 killing nuns to the strains of *Bitches Ain't Shit* to celebrate. >

Hitman Absolution is being developed by IO Interactive. Check them out at IOI.dk.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's actual, proper *Hitman*
- Contracts integrate well with the story
- We're already planning devious missions...
- ...featuring chicken suits

READ ME

Previously thought to be a linear take on a series that prides itself on being open-ended, IO has turned the tables on the doubters. It's now more open than ever.

Create contract

CONTRACT STARTING EQUIPMENT

This is the recommended equipment to complete this contract. You can choose different equipment, if you wish, but this may affect your ability to complete the Contract.

Silver Baller



Accuracy

Damage

Fire Rate

Range

47's Suit



Choose your disguises wisely. Or hilariously. Your call.



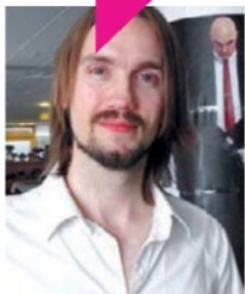
MIND OVER MATTER

Planning the perfect hit

CREATED BY YOUR friends they may be, but the contracts you can download promise to be as, if not more, devious than the ones IO put into the game. Up to three hits can be included in any one contract. As in the story mode, players can generally make the kill as they like, but if they don't do it in the same manner as the creator did they'll miss out on the top scores. We anticipate this is going to lead to some of the craziest missions yet seen in the series: if you've got a few spare minutes head over to YouTube and check out the *Hitman: Blood Money* speedruns (especially for the mission 'Curtains Down.')



THE REACTIONS TO THE ATTACK OF THE SAINTS TRAILER CAME AS A SHOCK TO US...



TORE BLYSTAD
Director,
Hitman: Absolution

Play sits down with Hitman director Tore Blystad to ask him about murder, nuns and offending people. Oh, and a game

The new Contracts mode seems like quite a natural evolution behind the concept of *Hitman*. It seems like a game where you make of it what you want to. We showed the same part of the game to demonstrate Contracts that we showed last year. So everyone that had concerns about it being too action-orientated can see that these areas are really complex and in-depth and have the same amount of complexity as previous *Hitman* games, or even more... the hippy apartment that you saw is now ten times bigger than before, and we played through it in a different

way to show you that it's up to you how you choose to approach it when you play the contract.

Is there pressure in the current market to add a competitive multiplayer mode? I guess. In the general market that is a very natural thing. For us, this cooperative spirit has always been present in *Hitman* games. Players have always been doing it on their own: ever since forums became the norm on the internet, fans have been competing with each other. So this is a very natural mode for us to implement.

Also throughout the entire story mode, like we did with the Sniper Challenge, there are leaderboards with your friends, country to country, the world... Who is the best assassin in the world for this part of the game? If you're not interested in that, you can try to at least beat your friends.

Did you ever think about implementing a playback or theatre mode?

We talked a lot about ghost modes, where you can see someone else through a playthrough, but we opted out because the game is so emergent that everything you do, the AI is reacting to it. So if you come to a certain point five seconds later, or even one second later, or if you diverge... we couldn't figure it out.

Did you look into multiplayer at all?

We discussed it a lot as a team, of course. A multiplayer mode didn't seem as natural as *Kane & Lynch*, while the Contracts mode is still kind of multiplayer. It takes the single-player experience and makes it social. And that was something that felt really perfect for a game that was so much about choice, where you have so many options to shape how the game is played.

Do you view the Sniper Challenge as the precursor to Contracts?

Exactly. Our hope is that we'll see the same amount of YouTube videos, and talk about each aspect of the game, even of the story mode, because there will be a similar leaderboard and competitive edge; it takes a lot of invested time to complete all the challenges, like the Sniper Challenge. We get metrics back from these super professionals using the tools at their disposal to do things we didn't even think was possible. We're very interested in bringing the community into the game itself.

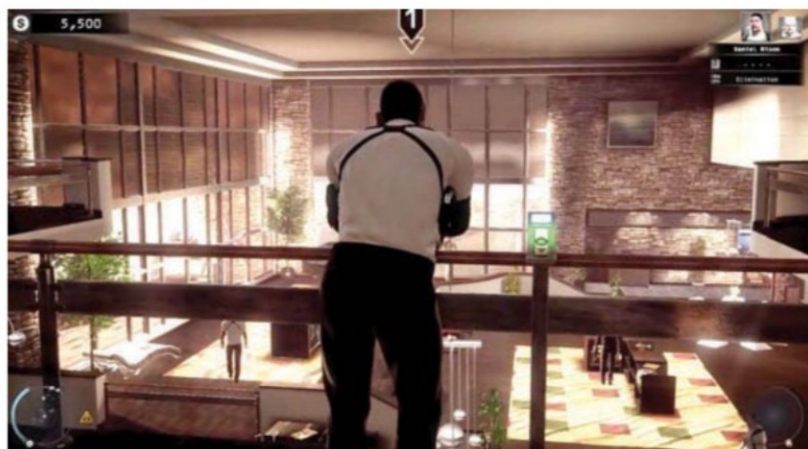
What were you trying to get across with the Attack Of The Saints trailer? Did you take offence to people's reactions to it?

They came as a shock to us. We didn't take offence, but we were taken aback by it. If you look at the *Hitman* games, they've always been quite cartoony as a style, a mix of reality and surreal, dark humour, almost kind of slapstick, and the mix of that is what makes it interesting, makes it stand out.

Attack Of The Saints is a level of the game that inspired the trailer, where the ICA has been sending these crazy assassins after 47, and that's just the encounter, they made it into a trailer, and I didn't expect it to have the kind of impact that it did.

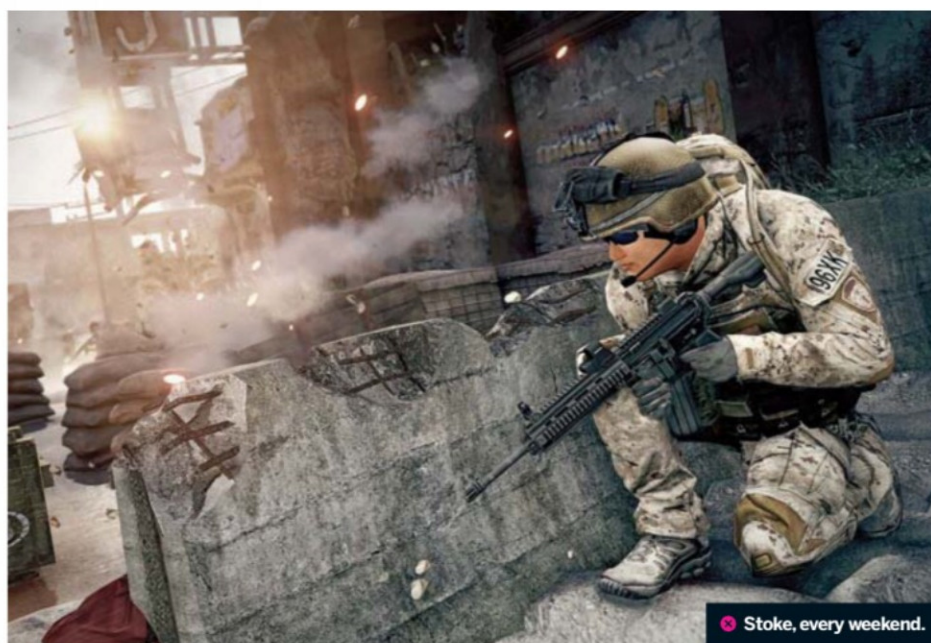
Did it change your approach to the level in-game?

It did, we realised we had to work on the backstory of these characters to make people understand the context better. We also had the ICA video out, called 'The Contract On The Saints', explaining where they come from more, and we took that into the game, and built them up as characters. They're more individual now... and we're doing weekly playtests to understand how other players react to it.





PREVIEW



AREN'T WE BORED YET?

Can the military FPS soldier on?

EVERY YEAR THERE are complaints that the FPS genre is getting stale, that there's oversaturation, that these games are all the same. *Medal Of Honor* producer Greg Goodrich sees it differently.

"*Plants Vs Zombies* is different from *Zombie Smash*, *Zombie Gunship*. Just like *Call Of Duty* and *Medal Of Honor* are different in tone. *Battlefield* is different to *Medal Of Honor*, in the scale and focus. *Battlefield* is all about the big war, the sledgehammer. We focus on the scalpel. We take a different tone, put players in those boots and tell them a story they can relate to."





RELEASE DATE: 26 OCTOBER

Incredible beard. Well done.

Medal Of Honor: Warfighter

Can't we all just get along?



Medal Of Honor is back! Again! EA's other military FPS might not have made

the greatest critical splash when it launched in 2010, but crucially it sold by the bucket load, giving it another shot at the big time. So here we are again: fatigue might be setting in when it comes to mil-FPSs, but producer Greg Goodrich reckons we'll have good reason to take a chance on *MOH* again.

"We were doing a lot of things during [development of the first game]," Goodrich tells us. "You're talking about a new studio, Danger Close, building the studio bringing a franchise out of WWII, thinking about assets, the lack of libraries for what we needed. And it was essentially two games in one box: two developers, two engines, two different creative visions. But we were proud of what we accomplished, and that was to reboot the franchise and hold true

to the core tenets. Going back to the roots, it was modern, but the themes were the same.

"We've moved technologies from UE3 to Frostbite 2," Goodrich continues. "Also, we're developing multiplayer now. Historically, the franchise has been known for single-player, so we've doubled down and bolstered our team.

"Fireteams was something we didn't know how people would react to, but it was a big hit coming out of E3. We had a lot to prove on multiplayer, so it was good to get that first nod, people saying good things. I had friends from the *Call Of Duty: Black Ops II* team come over and play it, guys from Infinity Ward, and they're like 'It's a lot of fun'. Which is always good, to have your peers say it's cool."

Fireteams is *Warfighter's* answer to the old problem of getting squad-based gameplay into a game that has got to be, thanks to the spectre

of *COD*, immediately appealing. Players will slot into a two-soldier squad with certain abilities: like squadding up on *BF3*, but now with a class-based twist: different combinations of soldier types give different perks to the team.

It sounds like a good idea, and should give an identity to a game that has struggled to find one, in multiplayer at least. The previous game was like a combination of *COD* and *Battlefield*, and while it was good could never hit the heights of either. Fireteams is an improvement that's not offered elsewhere. With that USP in the bag, Danger Close is turning its attention to what everyone else is doing better.

"I think that one of the issues we had was that we didn't support it enough post-launch and our colleagues at DICE certainly had other things to concentrate on with *Battlefield 3*. But with this game, we

haven't announced anything yet, but we do know that – in gaming in general but this genre especially – you absolutely have to support it with healthy content post-launch to keep that community around and involved and playing your game."

It's one thing to ape your rivals, quite another to defeat them, but Goodrich and Danger Close reckon they have the answer in regard to What Players Want.

"They want to have fun, engage in competition, prove themselves online, where skill matters. That is why balancing is so important. Especially when you talk about Fireteams coming up: people are trying to look for that great combination of squads all the time. We took previous play data and adjusted it... we knew we had things that we needed to tweak, so [balancing wise] we're in a very good place. [We] test twice a day every day to get that data, which shows us what people are playing, What's the most effective, not effective enough, and then tweak them so players enjoy the game."

MOH: Warfighter is being developed by Danger Close. Check them out at dangerclosegames.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ Fireteams sound interesting
- ❑ Danger Close is making the multiplayer much more of a focus
- ❑ More resources on hand this time around
- ❑ ... with Frostbite 2

READ ME

The last game was merely okay, but with a bigger, settled and more focused team this could be a viable alternative to the big hitters of the genre.



RELEASE DATE: 12 OCTOBER

XCOM: Enemy Unknown

"Over there...in them trees...I seeee yooooou..."



Seeking more knowledge on *XCOM: Enemy Unknown* led us to the lair

of one Garth DeAngelis, producer on the title at Firaxis Games. We threw some questions at him and, would you believe it, he answered – first of all on what the heck the studio thinks it's doing with the announced multiplayer mode: "It's basically a toybox where you can select any unit from the game – any human unit, any alien, any inventory item. They have a point cost associated with them and then you can build your perfect squad within the budget of that point cost. You're facing off against one other team and it's classic last man standing wins."

Which... alright, that sounds really good. It's not an out-and-out 'Multiplayer is insanely important' announcement which might have taken some of the attention away from the core single-player experience, instead opting to just be, like DeAngelis says, a toybox.

As that central experience of offline play isn't being taken for granted, we wanted to know what it is that *makes XCOM* – why it is the game we think we've been hoping for, for many years now. DeAngelis explained: "These are the things about the original that made it unique: the turn-based

combat, the strategy layer on top of it, the fog of war, the destructible environments, the permanent death – all of these things we had to bring to the modern version." So a straight remake then? Hardly.

"At the same time we had to modernise it – game design has evolved in the past 15-20 years, we can't just remake the same game with better graphics. There's no perfect science to it but I think the team did a fantastic job of maintaining the spirit of the original with all those elements, but the

Game design has evolved in the past 15-20 years, we can't just remake the same game

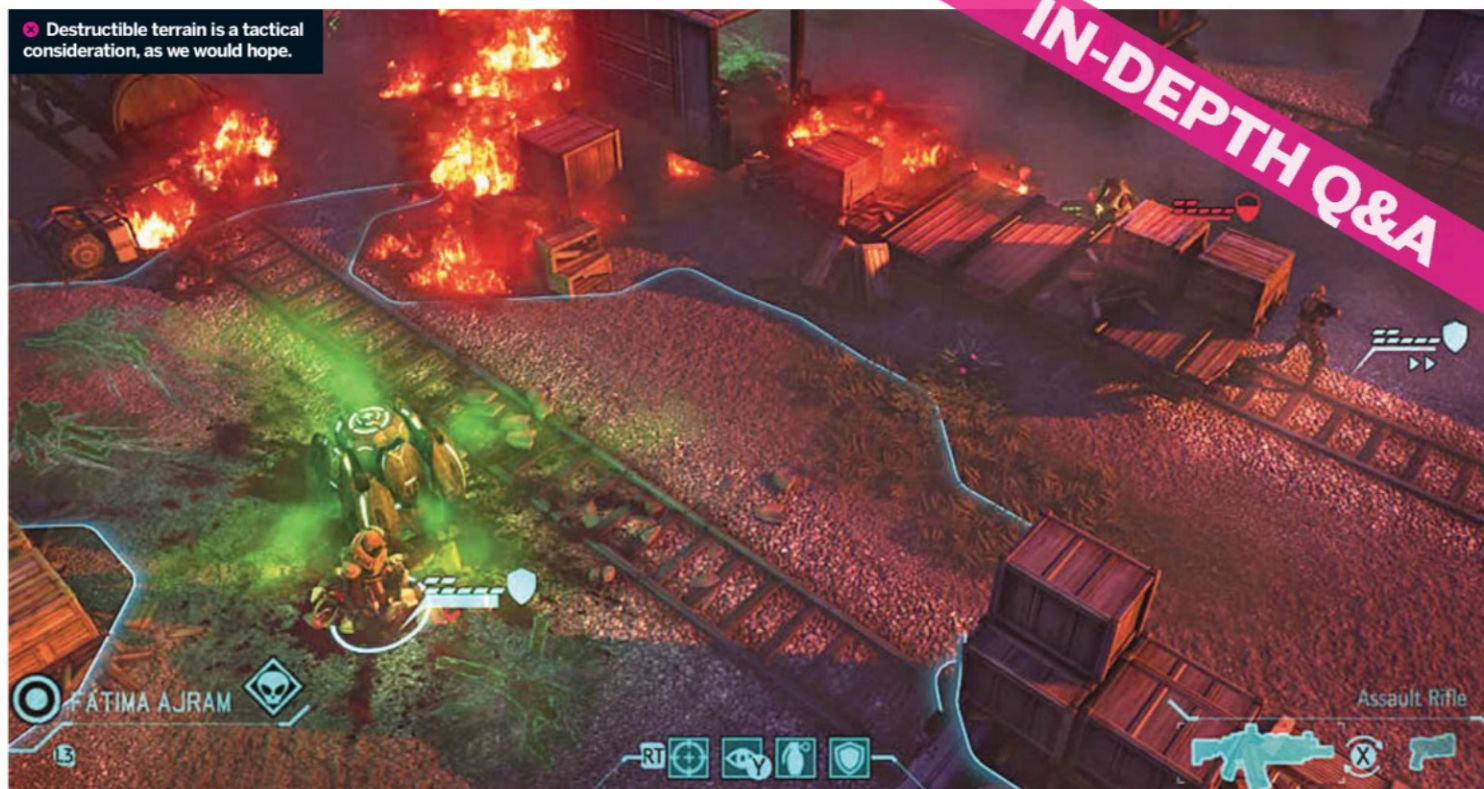
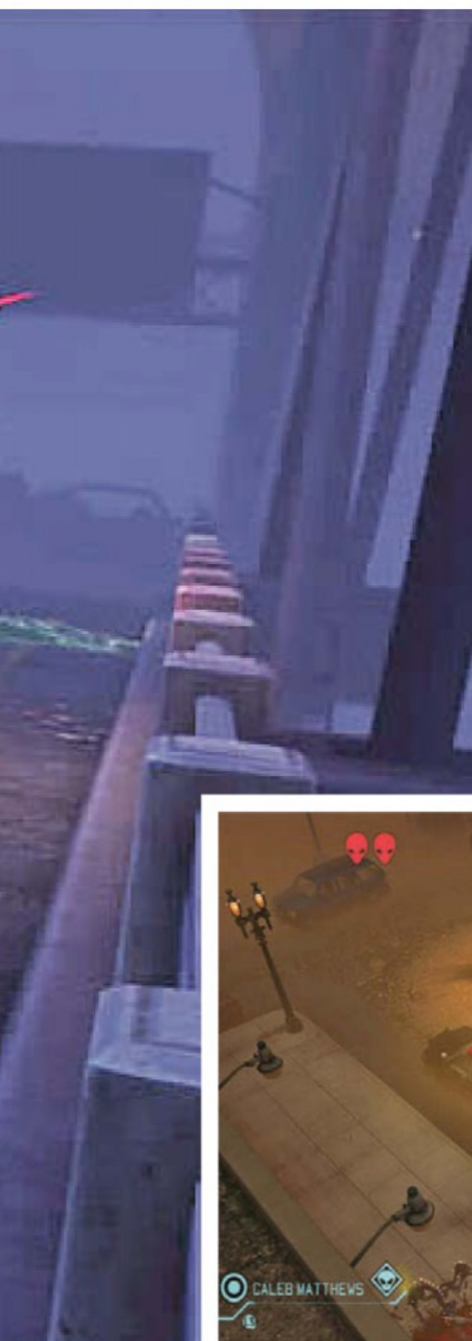
Oh it does look all dark and brooding, doesn't it?



Research returns, thankfully. We'll have to research where the damn PS3 screenshots are.



Oh crikey, it's a PS3 shot. Who knew?



mechanics underneath them have been updated and reimagined."

One area we were fearful would be toned down was difficulty. That same area is one in which DeAngelis put us in our place, just as the game will. "The original *XCOM* as you know was very challenging and we didn't want to lose that. Permanent death is a big part of that... We needed to have the challenge there and I'm confident players will like it – there's much more weight to the success. You know the potential consequences and the odds stacked against you – we had to have the challenge there."

But one thing definitely added is a more focused storyline, though it's not like you're going to be confronted with a dozen cut-scenes during each encounter, as DeAngelis was keen to point

We felt it was more powerful to just say 'This is the ultimate toybox, do what you want, combine the abilities in ways you want and then see if you are the best deathmatch player there is in *XCOM*

out: "It can't be a linear narrative because this is a game all about choices. For me, the more powerful element of *XCOM* is the internal narrative the players have... That internal narrative, for me in *XCOM*, is much more powerful than having a super-scripted story, and we didn't want to lose that... We have a little bit of both – I would say the internal narrative is more important, but we do have that narrative wrapper on top."

But, as if to wrap it up neatly, these linear story elements that appear in the game will not be

carried over into multiplayer. Back to DeAngelis: "We felt it was more powerful to just say 'This is the ultimate toybox, do what you want, combine the abilities in ways you want and then see if you are the best deathmatch player there is in *XCOM*.' Putting a story over that would be a little unnecessary."

The more we hear about *XCOM*, the more excited we get, it has to be said.

XCOM: Enemy Unknown is being developed by Firaxis Games. Check out www.xcom.com/enemyunknown for more details.

A VISUAL EVOLUTION

Justifying the stylistic choices: it's easy



ENEMY UNKNOWN'S LOOK is markedly different from the far more cartoony original, which you might expect, but again there's real thinking behind it. As DeAngelis told us: "It's kind of challenging in the modern day for a very talented art team to say 'We need to maintain the spirit of this tiny sprite [from the original game]' because we want to reimagine these aliens, but we need to make it feel more modern, we need to make it menacing." And so you get darker, more 'realistic' (for want of a better word) units and enemies, and less becaped Floaters. Because really? Capes? Come on.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Multiplayer looks to add fun, rather than demand focus
- Challenge. Challenge!
- Permadeath. Permadeath!
- The developers just keep on saying The Right Things

READ ME

The original *Enemy Unknown* took up a whole PSone memory card for a save. A whopping 128KB. The new one will have bigger saves, we think.

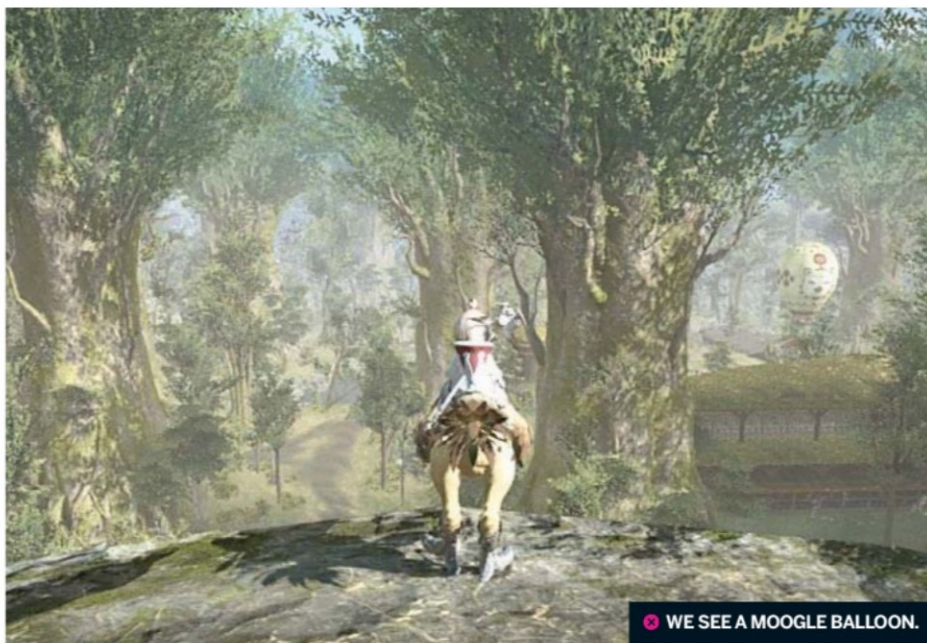
PREVIEW



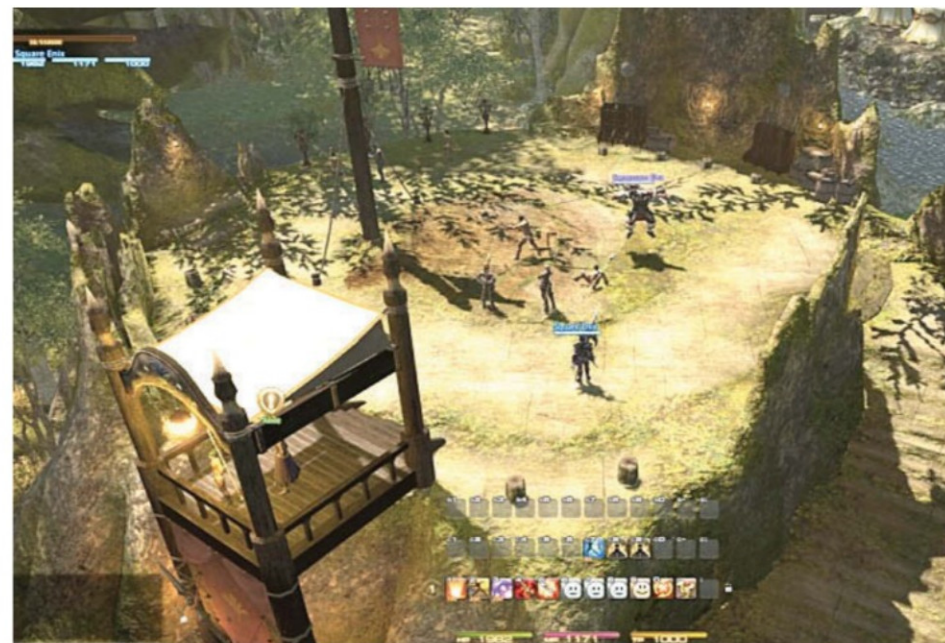
✖ Combat is... well, it looks like *Final Fantasy*, which is good.



✖ The devs are trying to make XIV 'more FF' before release.



✖ WE SEE A MOOGLE BALLOON.



GS-MANIA

Hitting the global standard for MMORPGs – it's important

"ONE OF THE most difficult things to do was to basically educate the development team about the global standard of MMORPGs. A lot of people didn't know, so we got them up to 'Okay, this is what players expect from a MMORPG, this is the global standard', and with *A Realm Reborn* we want to get to this level and go beyond it."



✖ It's really quite pretty when it wants to be.

THE COMEBACK



RELEASE DATE: Q1 2013

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn

A sit down and natter with director-since-December-2010, Naoki Yoshida



Final Fantasy XIV was initially whimsical in presentation, it now seems darker and more urgent – is this a conscious redesign?

There is a place for both light fantasy and dark fantasy and we want to incorporate both of those into the game. But I do realise, personally, that a lot of recent *Final Fantasy* games had a very light and whimsical feel – I want to go back into that darkness.

There have been high profile changes on the development team. What has been the result of these changes? Has it had a big effect on the game's direction?

A lot of the high profile members of the team changed and we got a lot of new people from other development teams outside to create this new core team. The remainder of the development team has stayed pretty much the same, so it wasn't like we had to start

over from zero and tell everyone what to do... When we decided to take the game in the direction of *A Realm Reborn*, we had to pretty much convince the development team to take the current version, continue to make updates to it for the current PC players and also make this new game. But once this new game is made, everything they've been making over the next year or so will be thrown away because it will be completely replaced. To motivate people when you're saying 'You're going to be making something for a year then it'll be gone' was very difficult.

FFXI has just hit its ten-year anniversary and continues to go from strength to strength, but you say you had to educate the dev team on XIV on how to do things right. What is it that XI got right that XIV was missing?

One of the reasons we believe XI was so successful at its launch

and is still successful now, ten years later, is that when they first started developing it, the whole development team basically went and played *Everquest* for a year, and were then thinking 'We want to do what they do with *Everquest* in the *Final Fantasy* series'. There were times when you couldn't contact people in the dev team unless you went into *Everquest* to talk to them – that's how much they played. The thing was, because they did that, they had a direction to go in, whereas one of the problems with the beginning of *Final Fantasy XIV* was that there wasn't that direction; there were a lot of developers who weren't aware of what that global standard was.

Which ideas from Hiromichi Tanaka remain in *A Realm Reborn*, and which are from the new direction of the team?

I really can't say, because to me it's less about who made something

and more about whether it's good or not. We get a lot of ideas from a lot of different people in the development team – they could be from a great battle planner or they could be from someone who's just entered the company recently – if it's a good idea I'll use it. It's the same [with older elements] – things that will be remaining from the original version of *FFXIV*, I don't know who those were by originally, so there could be things that were Tanaka's, there could be things that weren't. I don't put too much emphasis on that. Everything that goes into *A Realm Reborn* has to go through Mr Yoshida, so if you play it and you don't find it interesting, it's not a matter of who designed it – it's my decision to put it in the game so you complain to me [laughs].

And what will you be including to make it more 'FF-ish'?

We want to get the Crystal Tower in and the Golden Saucer, and the MagiTek armour as a mount, just getting that *FF* feel and adding other things to get that *FF* feel.

Final Fantasy XIV is being developed by Square Enix. Check out www.finalfantasyxiv.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Apparently not much makes it great right now
- Though this matters little to us on PS3, just PC players
- But Squeenix has admitted its mistakes and is fixing things
- Which makes it a bit easier to bear, though we still have to wait

READ ME

Final Fantasy XI, the first *FF* MMO, came out on PS2 and was the first game to require the little-used hard drive expansion. We never got it in Europe on PS2. Sigh.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2013

Tomb Raider

We sit down with Square Enix's Karl Stewart to chat about Tomb Raider

PS3

Can you go too far with a reinvention of this kind?

It's very important to us to spend time on the front end to create a game that's familiar yet different.

So we spent a lot of time setting the foundation of the story. There are tons of movies and TV shows...that have been reimagined over and over again, but in videogames there have been very few... *Tomb Raider* has been around for 16 years plus.

We look at it now and think, 16 years later, there are very few games that have the opportunity to re-imagine themselves, and bring along the people who remember playing it day one. It really excites us. We're very different.

How did you react to the 'rape' controversy over the trailer?

Situations like that do kind of knock you, get your head spinning. But the

guys have been so passionate in the studio that they just got back into it. It's unfortunate that happened. But we always knew from day one, the decision we made to reimagine Lara in an M-rated space, there were going to be story and narrative [aspects of the game] that we knew were going to be challenging to bring to the forefront.

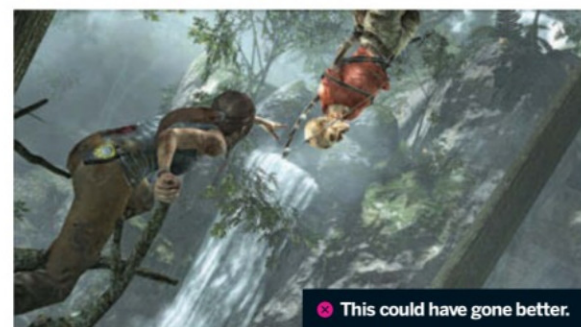
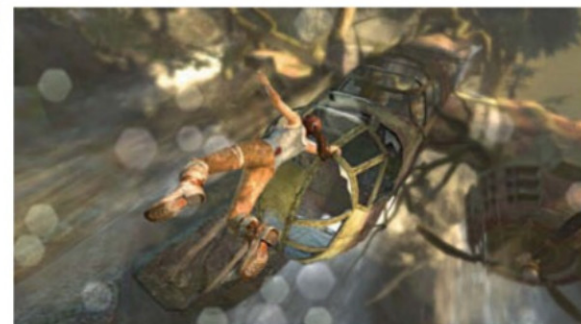
Some of the storylines inside it will be very strong storylines that people might not have seen before in a videogame, but will feel familiar from TV shows or from movies. The hard thing about videogames, as always, is that when you watch a movie, you don't have control over your character. In a videogame, you do, so there's a fine line between getting deep into a story as much as you would in the cinema, but we're in a good place, because the game we built the story and narrative on

is very, very strong. We don't want to give away spoilers but there are moments in there where even I've sat back, after playing the game 100+ times, and gone "Wow".

How much pressure do you feel there is to appeal to the broadest audience possible?

Once we'd made certain decisions like that, with survival, you kind of put yourself on a [certain] track where you say we're no longer [for a younger audience]; we're no longer short skirts and big chest; we're more realism and personality. Once you start that, you have to continue it... there are a lot of people who say that this isn't the Lara that we know or the Lara that we love, and unfortunately there may be people who say that we love what you did before but didn't like this. I think for anybody who gives it an opportunity it's still inherently Lara Croft, still *Tomb Raider*... with our new hub system you might get people who think 'I now am an explorer! I'm now doing all the things I was meant to be doing before.'

Tomb Raider is being developed by Crystal Dynamics. Check them out at crystalld.com



✖ This could have gone better.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

✖ Survival gameplay a welcome change

✖ It's not all about T&A

✖ Oh, and the game looks really good as well

✖ Which is good, because Square needs no more bad publicity

READ ME

It might be a violent new reinvention, but Square Enix insists that the essence of the franchise is still present.

BACK IN THE SWING OF THINGS

New Lara, new beginnings

IT'S *TOMB RAIDER*, but things have gotten very real very quickly. No longer an impossible-chested toff flying around the world shooting dinosaurs for fun, here Lara has to prove her worth by surviving both the environment and those that inhabit it. It's an exciting change for a series long stale.



RELEASE DATE: Q4 2012

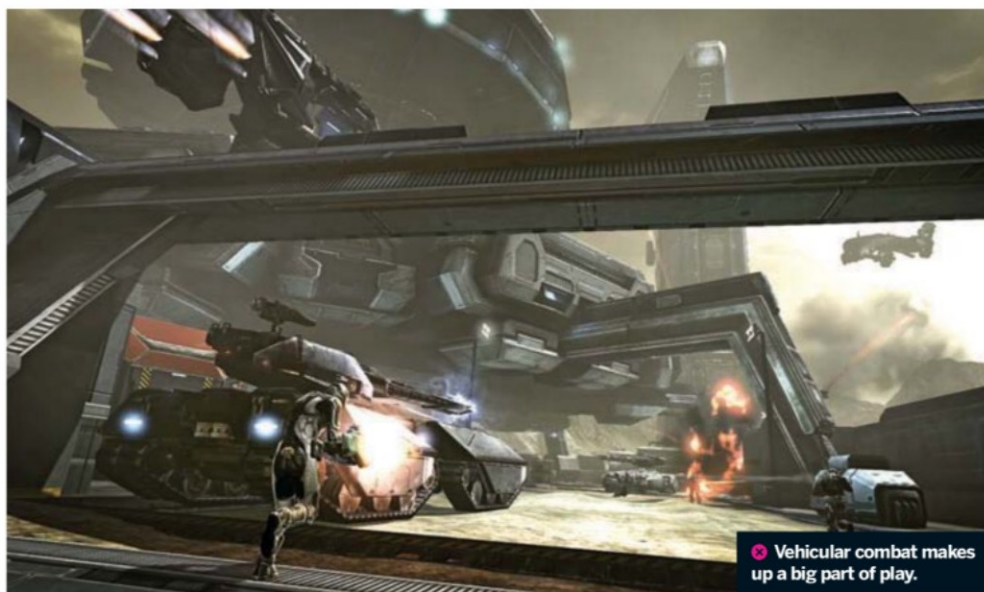
Dust 514

Atli Már Sveinsson? No, it's just the way we're sitting. Oh wait, he's the creative director at CCP Asia

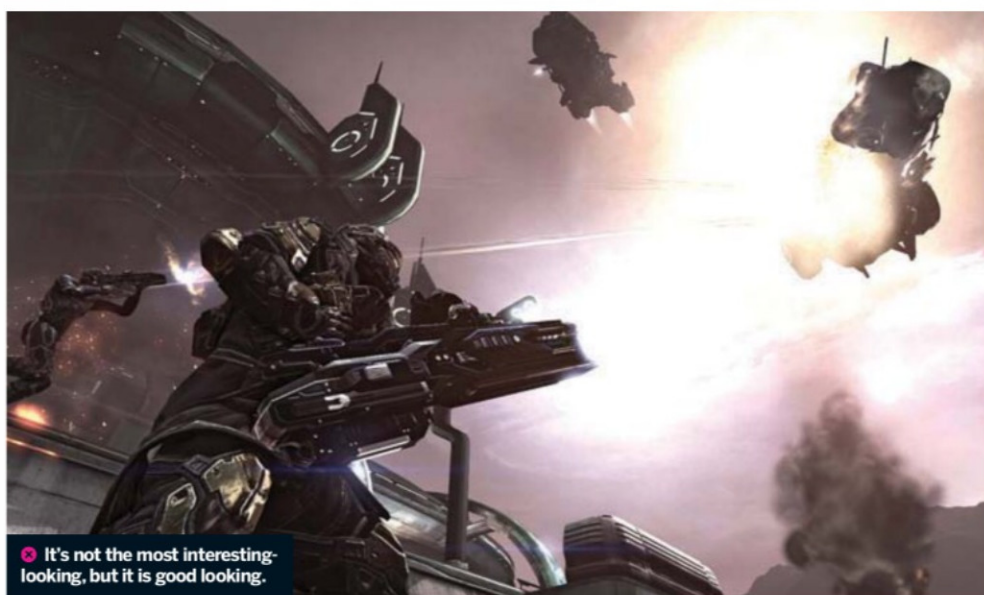
THE RABBIT HOLE

But just how much can you put into *Dust*?

"WE LIKE TO say that the rabbit hole goes as deep as you want it to – this applies to the relationships in the game, from *EVE* link, corporations between *Dust* players and so on – but it's also about our customisation systems, the market, trading and that sort of stuff. You don't have to use it if you don't want, but we encourage you to."



❖ Vehicular combat makes up a big part of play.



❖ It's not the most interesting-looking, but it is good looking.

PS3 How do you think the *EVE* community feels about other people playing 'their' game? Is there any snobbery at all involved?

Not really. We've interacted with the community and we meet them at the CSM [Council Of Stellar Management] regularly, and the reception has been cautious on their behalf, especially in the beginning when we started talking about this. But since the last Fanfest when we opened up all of our plans and started working actively with the CSM community on messaging this properly things have been extremely positive. I mean, there's always someone – a naysayer or a negative guy – but I think the majority of them are happy about this. They've already started recruiting *Dust* players, *Dust* players have started recruiting *EVE* players – it's started.

How do you see the community merging, or blending together?

Violently! [Laughs] No, what we're seeing from the reactions from the beta, the current pillars of the community in *EVE*, the large corporations and alliances and stuff like that, it is fairly smooth. They've kind of accepted the fact that these

guys are coming in, they know that they will have to use them for certain parts of the game and vice-versa, so there's a 'need' relationship there to a certain extent.

***Dust* is quite complex as modern FPS games go – do you think this might alienate some gamers?**

We're acting on things to make them more accessible – new player experiences, tutorials, stuff like that – we've already made lots of changes from the beta, making it more accessible, cleaning up some of the UI, those kind of things. I think that it is important to note that we have matchmaking, we have fair and balanced matches, we have an experience for people that are used to more traditional console FPSs.

What happens if *Dust* is a failure? If it just ends up being, for want of a better term, dead space?

That kind of scenario, we don't think about. We are committed to maintaining the game, building on it – it's a marathon, not a sprint. So we'll do what we do with *EVE*: continue improving and listening to feedback.

***Dust 514* is being developed by CCP Games. Check out www.dust514.com for more details.**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❖ Free-to-play, not pay-to-win
- ❖ The link twist *EVE* and *Dust* is taking off
- ❖ After playing the beta we can say: it's fun
- ❖ Our PC overlords can now actually boss us around! Oh, wait...

READ ME

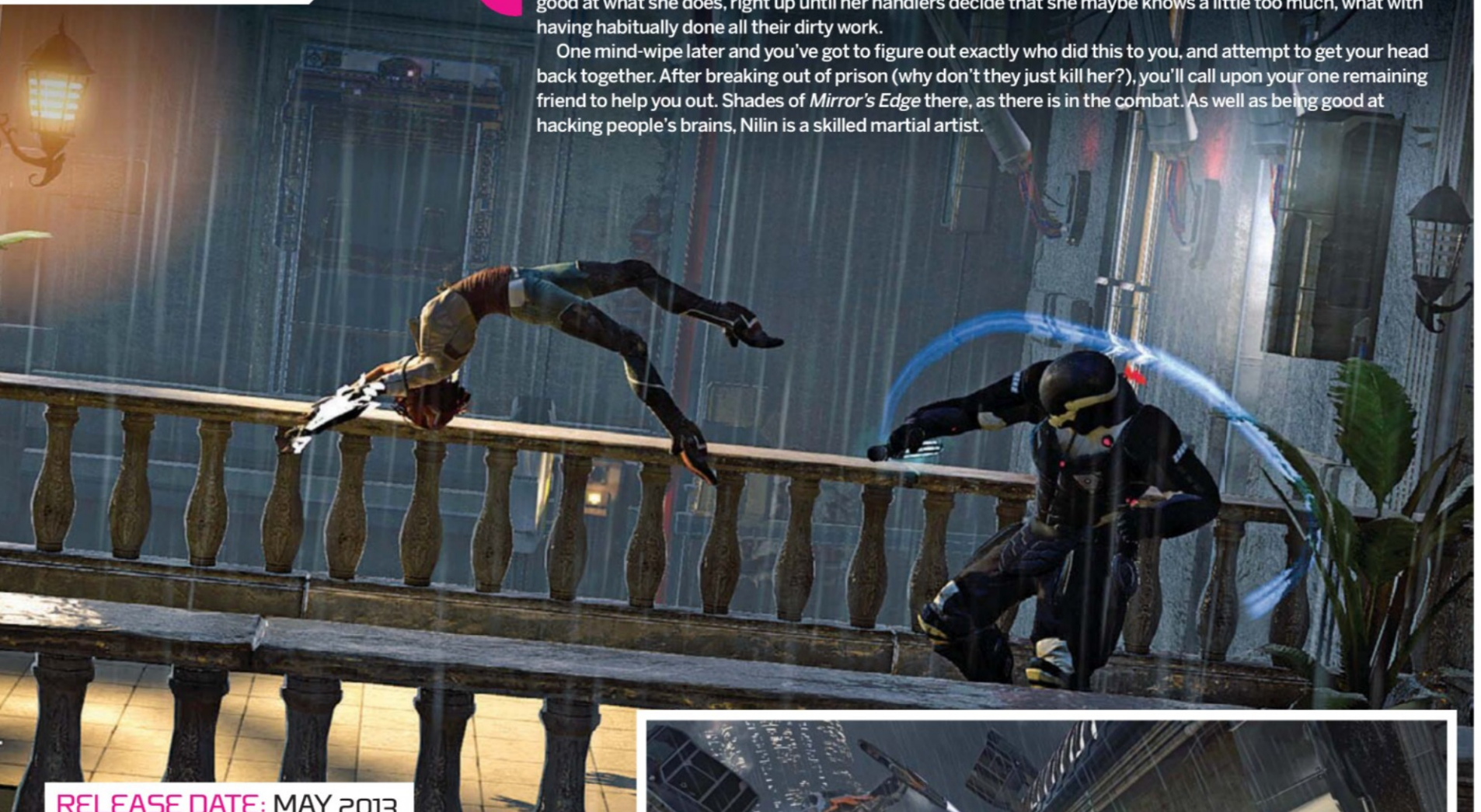
Már Sveinsson was lead designer on *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* back in the day, so there are real FPS credentials backing *Dust* up.

1

MINDJACKED

Remember Me's lead is Nilin, a ruthless and talented memory hacker in Neo-Paris, 2084. As usual, she's very good at what she does, right up until her handlers decide that she maybe knows a little too much, what with having habitually done all their dirty work.

One mind-wipe later and you've got to figure out exactly who did this to you, and attempt to get your head back together. After breaking out of prison (why don't they just kill her?), you'll call upon your one remaining friend to help you out. Shades of *Mirror's Edge* there, as there is in the combat. As well as being good at hacking people's brains, Nilin is a skilled martial artist.



RELEASE DATE: MAY 2013

Remember Me

Where's your head at?

PS3

Sorry to those R-Patz (sigh) fans who saw the title and squealed in delight, but Capcom's latest isn't an adaptation of a rubbish 2010 film. Instead, like *Watch Dogs* before it, *Remember Me* is looking to meld open world exploration with *Assassin's Creed*'s sci-fi trappings. Unlike *Watch Dogs*, however, where you hack external technology, here you hack minds. As an agent for a shadowy corporation, it's your job to change your target's memories, giving them false impressions of their lives, which then leads them to drastically alter their futures. Which is a bit of a cruel way of torturing someone, but lead character Nilin doesn't seem to care: one example saw a man commit suicide after he was hacked to believe he had killed his wife. Fashionable gimmick, or intriguing gameplay mechanic? Let's have a look.



2

THE FUTURE'S SHITE

Set in 2084, the future Paris of *Remember Me* is essentially how London is now: everyone is watching you, all the time, and you better get used to it. The surveillance state that Nilin has to negotiate seems fascistic in nature – all authoritarian slogans and street patrols – but it seems that the citizens have accepted that, getting on with their business like the good drones they are.

Oppressive government aside, we're looking forward to seeing what Neo-Paris has to offer. We quite enjoyed climbing around the place in *The Saboteur*, and with the addition of the future tech there should be some interesting changes about the place.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

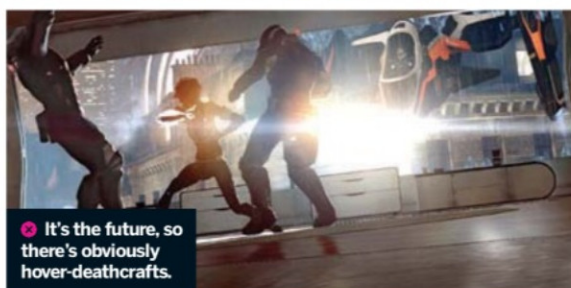
- Interesting take on hacking
- Memory manipulation sounds cool
- Big surveillance culture
- Which reminds us of London

READ ME

Set in a future where everyone's thoughts are everywhere all the time (so, er, just like now) Capcom's dystopian *Inception*-alike could be a hit.

NILIN AROUND

Getting to know Neo-Paris



It's the future, so there's obviously hover-deathcrafts.



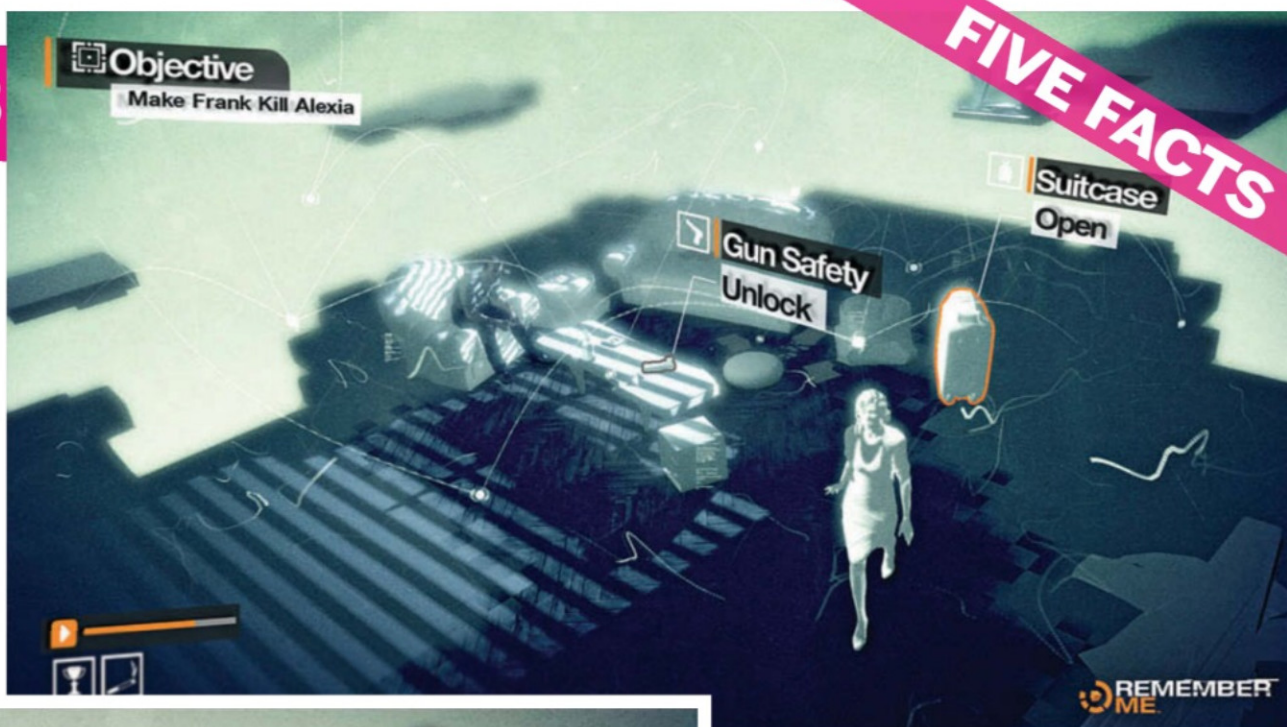
Here's Nilin, the game's protagonist and ace glove-wearer.

THE PUZZLE FACTORY

Remember Me's hook is that you can explore people's minds, changing their memories to influence future actions (CUE BLARING INCEPTIONHORNS).

Remotely hacking a despised authority figure, Nilin finds a memory of his wife leaving him. The mission is to get him to kill himself before he is promoted into further power (because killing him yourself would be too obvious) by manipulating his memory. Making him drunkenly stumble on a bottle and taking the safety off of the gun he grasps on the way down sets off a new series of events where he accidentally shoots his wife. 'Waking' from the memory, the guilt-ridden commander proceeds to blow his brains out. BWAAARRRGH!

3



4

HITMAN AND HER

Interesting as it already is, there's no doubt in our minds (or is there...? BWARRRRGH) that the demo shown is just the tip of the iceberg. After all, to retain players' interest, the game is going to have to keep escalating the levels of complexity and involvement, which means only one thing: crazy characters with mental backstories.

If we had to guess, we'd say that as the game goes on there will be a more defined puzzle aspect: maybe multiple choices of how a memory plays out, with the most imaginative ones getting the bigger rewards. Like *Hitman*, but in your mind, man, and much, much more bizarre.



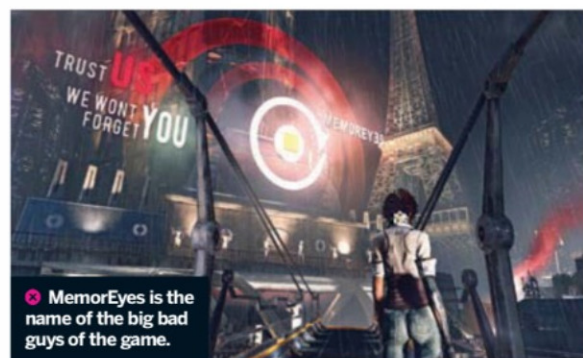
TOTAL RECALL

One other intriguing aspect of *Remember Me* is that memories are seen as currency, bought and sold on the open market. If implemented properly as a mechanic then this could be something special: imagine buying someone else's memory and then putting it into another person entirely.

The scope for interesting/hilarious outcomes is massive: especially if you can swap memories across gender divides. It'll be like *Freaky Friday*, or *Vice-Versa*, or *Big*, but now this time in game form.

On a serious note, this could also be a smart way to handle any upgrade tree the game may have: buy or steal memories to remember how to do things. We like it.

5



✳️ MemorEyes is the name of the big bad guys of the game.



✳️ This is what memories look like according to *Remember Me*.



✳️ Nilin's got the classic Capcom 'Wonder Arm', just like Mega Man, Krauser, etc.



GRINDING THE GEAR

TROUBLED PRODUCTION AND THAT NAME ARE SWIFTLY BEING FORGOTTEN AS METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE STARTS TO SHOW US JUST HOW IMPRESSIVE IT'S LOOKING. WE SPOKE TO YUJI KOREKADO, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS, TO FIND OUT JUST WHY WE SHOULD CARE

METAL GEAR RISING REVENGEANCE

Revengeance. It's not a word. It sounds stupid. It still regularly gets laughed at. But the tide is turning, and it's turning in favour of the latest *Metal Gear* game – not *Solid*, but *Rising*. It's turning because people are starting to look past the word, people are starting to realise the troubled development hasn't been all that troubled since Platinum Games took over. And people are starting to realise *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* might well be another fantastic game from the Japanese masters of action titles.

But let's get down to basics here – let's ask Yuji Korekado of Kojima Productions some questions. Like: why in blue hell go with Raiden – much-maligned protagonist of *Metal Gear Solid 2* – as lead character? "Raiden is a character that was in other *Metal Gear* titles – specifically *Metal Gear Solid 4*, where he's only in cut-scenes. So he's making all these cool movements, jumping around from one place to another." Though obviously that's not the sole reason to put him in *Revengeance*, as Korekado explained: "Now one of the things with making *Metal Gear Rising* is that we wanted the player to be able to control and do all of those movements, so this was part of the motivation to have [Raiden as lead character]."

Kojima Productions is handling the story elements of the game, even though development has been handed off, so what does this mean for *Rising*? When is it set in the grand scheme of things? "The story of *Rising* takes place after the events of *Metal Gear Solid 4*," Korekado explained. "At the end of *MGS4*, Snake and Raiden work together with the other characters to defeat the organisation of the Patriots, who were aiming at controlling the world economy. Snake and Raiden successfully stopped that." Okay then. And *Rising* fits in how? "So *Metal Gear Rising* takes off in a world where this happened, and we're looking at the results of what happened – so it is completely connected to events in previous titles." Yet the game is still, as we've been told numerous times, non-canonical. Just so you're aware. >



Fighting helicopters. As you would.

> Though it's a spin-off of an established universe of characters, the fact *Rising* is an entirely different style of game to earlier *Metal Gears* means it's likely to open the franchise up to a far wider audience. Korekado is well aware of the challenge this presents and the concessions that have to be made for newcomers: "*Metal Gear Rising* is within the world of *Metal Gear*, but we don't have Snake – we have Raiden: we have a new hero and new gameplay. As far as the narrative goes, we are making a story in such a way that the new users are able to understand what's going on even if they start at *Metal Gear Rising*." Though, just to keep all bases covered, this won't be to the detriment of series veterans: "But that said, the events in *Rising* are completely tied to other titles so there are elements that only fans of *Metal Gear* will [notice and] enjoy."

Rising's development troubles, much as we want to move beyond them, are an important factor in the genesis of the game. Without them, the game wouldn't have ended up with Platinum. We wouldn't have this interesting-looking title we're anticipating good things from. But what was going on at Kojima Productions in the quiet time, when not much was heard of from *Rising* (pre-*Revengeance*)? "For this period we were developing the game inside Kojima Productions, trying different things," Korekado told us, "but one difficulty was that we had several elements of this game but we didn't have a core route – a very specific thing that would be the core of this game." This lack of focus caused problems: "We had a lot of difficulties inside the studio. So at some point we decided to stop at that point, work with someone outside of the studio and give it a try with a different view."

That 'different view', of course, was provided by Platinum Games. Korekado explained how the decision was made: "The point when we made this decision of working with someone outside of our studio, Hideo Kojima said 'One of the core features of this game is the katana, it's a sword game, so it has to be a Japanese developer – a Japanese developer will know how to handle a katana.' So when we looked into Japanese developers of action games, Platinum Games had this fantastic record for their action games, so we went straight to them and asked if they would like to co-operate with us for this project – fortunately they agreed." >

IDEAS MAN

Just like *Revengeance*, the *Metal Gear* series is one that's been through a lot of changes. Here are some...

PERMADEATH

■ At some point in the past series creator Hideo Kojima toyed with the idea of a save file that corrupted itself or a disc that somehow erased itself when the player died. Proper permadeath. Utterly ridiculous.

A CENTURY-OLD NAZI

■ The End of *MGS3* fame came from the original idea for *MGS2* – Old Boy. He was to be a 100-year-old Panzerfaust-wielding mentor of the likes of Big Boss. Oh, and he was a Nazi.

METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

■ It's been repeated many times, but it's worth mentioning again: what is now *Revengeance* was originally a 'Solid' game, and it was actually cancelled before Platinum's involvement.

A PRE-TEEN MERYL

■ Someone (Yoji Shinkawa, character designer for the *Metal Gear Solid* series) had been watching a bit too much of the film *Leon* before envisioning Meryl: she was meant to be a pre-teen girl. Fortunately, redesigns happened.

METAL GEAR SOLID III

■ Not *MGS3*, which we did indeed get, but a different name for *MGS2*. Hideo Kojima basically wanted to mess with people by calling the second *Solid* game *Metal Gear Solid III*. He didn't, thank crikey.

MULTIPLAYER

■ The second *Solid* game was planned to include two-player versus multiplayer. Thinking about it, with the duelling sword action toward the end of the game, we can sort of see why. It was dropped, though.

QUITTING

■ Hideo Kojima has said he will not make *Metal Gear Solid 3*, *Metal Gear Solid 4* or *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*. Hideo Kojima made *Metal Gear Solid 3*, *Metal Gear Solid 4* and *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*.

MAIN CHARACTER DEATHS

■ An original draft of *Metal Gear Solid 4* saw Snake and Otacon making the ultimate sacrifice – handing themselves over to the authorities for their crimes and ultimately being executed. Kojima's staff rallied against this version, and it never happened.



We might actually like Raiden as a character after this. Well, maybe.



Raiden's got the moves like Jagger! If Jagger had a sword. And was fast.





NOT THE PLATINUM STANDARD

Platinum was the first – in fact, the only choice – to develop *Revengeance*. But what if other devs took the helm?

POLYPHONY DIGITAL

SPECIALITY:

Intense, incredible, insane detail

An introductory sequence, lasting 30 minutes, would explain how the word 'Revengeance' was created – going back to the very formation of language as we know it. It would be eccentric, but boring.

SQUARE ENIX

SPECIALITY:

Taking time, spending money

Revengeance would manage to take even longer to come out than the Platinum version is doing, would cost an estimated \$58m to make and would have an unfathomably awkward 'laughing' scene. It would sell tens of millions.

CAPCOM®

SPECIALITY:

Outsourcing

Outsourced from Kojima Productions to Capcom, *Revengeance* would see itself again outsourced to an unproven American developer. Raiden's katana would be paid-for DLC.



Konami says Raiden's katana is 'one of the core features of the game.'



Slice it down the middle! That tip works with everything in this game.





Child soldier

■ Raiden wasn't exactly raised in suburban paradise in a middle-class area of Kent. No, he was a child soldier – a fighter almost from birth.



Growing up

■ He didn't actually grow up, because he's not real, but Kojima Productions and co. did iterate upon the man who would be our new hero quite a lot.

Most hated man in gaming

■ Eventually we ended up with this guy. And a lot of gamers hated him. Because this whelp – the blonde, whinging pretender – was irritating, boring and not Snake.



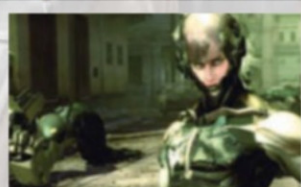
THE EVOLUTION OF RAIDEN

FROM CHILD SOLDIER TO HATE FIGURE TO BADASS NINJA



Solid parody

■ The hatred for Raiden wasn't lost on the developers, who made the parody character Raikov for the game that didn't actually feature Jackie boy. It wasn't actually funny, but was still a nice touch.



Back and badass

■ So you create a character, he's hated, you mock your creation, then you decide to bring him back. Madness? Well no, not if you're going to bring him back as a robot ass-kicking badass.



Melon-chopper

■ Just as we were riding the wave of 'How cool is Raiden', it was announced he would head the next *Metal Gear* game. He would look badass, rip out spines and... uh... chop melons.



Bayonetta who?

■ Fortunately the drawing board was used one more, and the version of Raiden we've been left with by Platinum Games is... well, he's nowhere near as bad as *Metal Gear Solid 2*'s.

REVERT TO TYPE

Revengeance seems to be a combination of Platinum's past. How? Read on...



Bayonetta

■ ELEMENT: Combat

Technical, but welcoming for those with less talent, *Bayonetta's* combat is arguably one of the best fighting systems we've seen in an action game. Ever. Alright, scratch the 'arguably' part – it just is. This looks to have translated to *Revengeance*, at least in part, with quick, brutal combos and a depth that goes well beyond merely hammering the same button for eight hours.



Vanquish

■ ELEMENT: Pace

Vanquish is a relentless game – it just keeps going. Everything we've seen of *Revengeance* points in the same direction: there will be down time, but that will be the exception, rather than the rule. Sure, that attitude doesn't fit the traditional *Metal Gear* mould – but it fits Raiden perfectly, especially after how he was presented in *MGS4*.



MadWorld

■ ELEMENT: Violence

You might have missed this one, what with it being released on Wii and nobody actually buying the damn thing. Still, *MadWorld* is a silly, over-the-top and super-violent game that's worth looking up if you can find a copy anywhere. This ludicrous violence (yes, you read that right, we did say on a Wii game) has clearly made the leap to Raiden's choppy-choppy *Revengeance*.



⊗ Raiden's lightning-quick ninja run can be combined with his other moves.



⊗ For those who liked *Bayonetta*, *Vanquish* or *MadWorld*, you'll love this.

> The choice of Platinum did shock people, it has to be said. It's not a studio known for taking on licensed properties, instead usually opting to develop its own, unique ideas. "Platinum Games is a studio well known for its new IPs and revolutionary IPs," Korekado agreed, "but another thing we have learned is that the developer has a lot of focus on wanting to create something that just by touching it feels good; just by pushing a button it feels good, moving a lever will feel good to the player. That's something they really take care of. We have this in *Metal Gear Rising* – it's a game that just by touching it feels good.

"Another thing is that when only the staff of Kojima Productions was working on *Rising*, in one way or another we all had this feeling of 'Well, if it's a *Metal Gear* game it has to be like this, or has to have this'" So Platinum came in as a breath of fresh air: "When we started working together with Platinum, they had these revolutionary ideas that we probably would never have been able to think of because we're trying to [stick with this mentality]. But when they proposed the changes, we kept them, we said these are actually things that will make *Metal Gear Rising* better. So they have brought these

ideas that we just hadn't thought of. This way we have the new ideas that have new effects on the game – I believe that this collaboration we have with Platinum Games and Kojima Productions is really bringing new things and good things."

Once the game is out and about, slashing things up like a maniac in the wild, it's safe to dream of the future. But what future is this? Well it's a future of DLC – undefined at the moment, but something Platinum has gone on record as having interest in producing. New missions, new locales, even new characters – though how the latter would fit in with the choppy-chop mechanic we're not entirely sure (it'll be interesting to find out, naturally).

But what DLC won't be bringing to the fore is online multiplayer, competitive or otherwise. We dream of a world where eSports tournaments see hundreds of people from around the world using Raiden to neatly slice melons in order to win tens of thousands of dollars, but it looks like that isn't going to fly with *Rising*.

What is going to fly with *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, though, is the blood. The over-the-top action. The fun. And that stupid word. ⊗



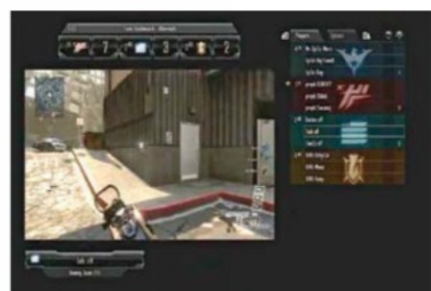
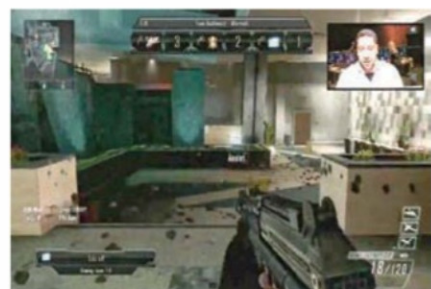


Black Ops II's multiplayer has had some pretty obvious changes made to it, even just at first glance. It's set in the future, for starters, which means that we'll be knee-deep in robo-death and *Total Recall*-esque scanning equipment the very second we step foot onto the battlefield. It dares to jettison aspects of the series that are as integral to *Call Of Duty* as 12-year-olds and noob-tubing: the new Pick 10 system shakes up the fundamentals of picking a loadout, and Scorestreaks replacing Killstreaks could be the best thing to happen to the series since Martyrdom was removed.

"[Making big changes is] something we're genuinely super, super passionate about." *Black Ops II* design director David Vonderhaar tells us. "*Black Ops II*, if you look at Treyarch's history, is actually our first sequel, but we didn't want that to mean anything other than learning everything we could from the last game, which is why you're seeing all the fundamental assumptions about core gameplay systems of the last game getting dumped on their head."

Vonderhaar isn't kidding. In fact, that's an understatement. Like any *COD*, there are changes that are going to impact second-to-second play, but there's something larger at work here.

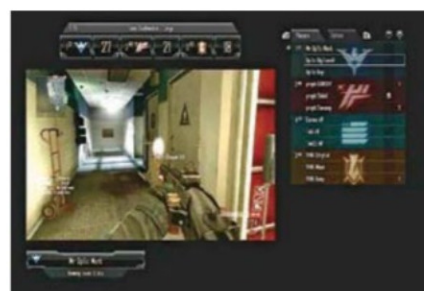
Something that, with a lot of money and a bit of luck, could be the



BLACK OPS II

THE ESPORT OF THE FUTURE

LIKE THE WARS IT'S BASED ON, CALL OF DUTY APPARENTLY NEVER CHANGES. DEVELOPER TREYARCH OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T GET THAT MEMO: BLACK OPS II WANTS TO FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE WAY WE CONSUME ONLINE GAMING. ESPORTS? LIVE STREAMING? WHO CARES? YOU WILL



starting point of a far larger change than custom loadouts and securing helicopter gunships for capturing a flag.

That 'something' comes in the form of Treyarch's commitment to the world of eSports. 'CODcasting' – which enables players to put together commentary and multi-angle packages over other, ongoing games – is an exciting addition to a game perfectly set up for over-the-top drama. Add in Treyarch's work (in progress) on a live streaming tool for players to beam *their own games* onto the internet and it's a potential game changer.

Remember when eSports and watching live videogame matches seemed so nerdy and alien it was probably the inspiration for the movie *Paul*? Treyarch wants to change that.

It should come as no surprise. *Call Of Duty* is long past being merely a videogame, with a fame and pull that makes Justin Bieber look like Justin Lee Collins. It's everywhere, and Activision wants to capitalise on it. It wants to turn it from a game into a sport. CODcasting and Live Streaming are the first steps.

Treyarch is keeping quiet on exactly how players will stream ongoing matches onto their PS3s to watch the action live, but an in-game menu is surely on the cards. After all, why have all this tech (and the ability to host it on *Call Of Duty Elite*, perhaps) if you're going to send people to a third-party site? >



You can take them on at Call Of Duty or watch them destroy others...



DONT BE SURPRISED IF THE NEXT PLAYSTATION YOU OWN ENABLES YOU TO WATCH THE NEW COD AS EASILY AS YOU PLAY IT

coverage doesn't just usually follow one participant. Multiple angles = more drama. It's that simple.

If Activision is to complete its mission of making *COD* a spectator sport, it knows that while high production values are good, handing off control of those values to gamers is much better. During our demo we saw CODcasters pulling up an overhead map to get a better sense of the engagements, map flow, and how the level was laid out. It's something that appeals to the armchair commander in all of us: think a tiny bit of *Football Manager*, minus the direct control, shouting, and broken marriages.

Other options are available, for those that feel the endless need to tinker (so *Call Of Duty* fans, basically). CODcasters can open up a screen that shows everyone's Scorestreaks updating in real time, along with a scoreboard and >



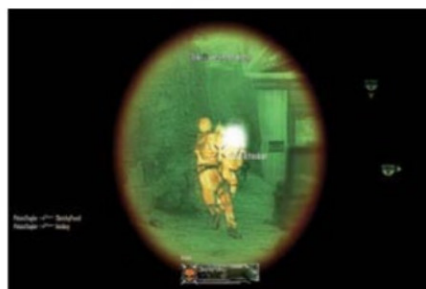
> So the 'how' is sorted then. If you're asking yourself 'why' anyone would want to do that, you're probably not in the minority at this point. After all, no-one wants to see a guy running and gunning for ten minutes, inevitably failing to kill a man despite firing 200,000 rounds at him.

Or do they? ESports may still be on the periphery of the industry, but the interest is there, and it's growing. Organisations like Major League Gaming offer cash prizes and incentives at their tournaments, and there's an entire community of players out there ready to get their gun on via it and other organisations. Professional *StarCraft* players have their matches beamed around the world and become superstars, albeit mainly in Asia. Closer to home (with home being 'the west', of course) just look at the success of the Evo fighting game tournament, where the winners of the various tourneys walk away with thousands of dollars. Sure, it's not going to trouble 'real' sports salaries, but it's a start.

The community more than exists: it thrives, because games have always been about A) killing things and B) competition, hence why Evo does so well. With fighting games however, things are clearly defined: there are two players, one screen, and one winner. *Call Of Duty*, however, with players in the double digits and explosions recalling the frequency of a certain fraught mid-Forties trip over Normandy beach, is different. How do you know who to follow when you're streaming the match?

Treyarch reckons it has you covered. There's the standard, 'as if you were playing it first-person' view for those that really want to get into the action, or follow one single player (like the guy who killed more people than Pol Pot and winter combined at the reveal earlier this year).

If you get bored of that, then CODcasters are free to change their viewpoint. This is one of the key areas that Treyarch has really focused on, for the same reason that 'real' sport



The pace is still ridiculously quick.

THE ESPORT OF THE FUTURE

THE GORE SCORE

Checking out Black Ops' Death Toll (and other stats)

78%

US GDP SPENT

AMMUNITION SPENT

2,611

BILLION ROUNDS

220,145,391,387
COD POINTS WON

12,570,125,634
KILLSTREAKS CALLED

932,059,586
CHALLENGES COMPLETED

2,590,714,290
KILLSTREAKS DESTROYED

141,565,065
HEADQUARTERS DESTROYED

312,567,354
COMEBACKS

153,934
YEARS SPENT PLAYING

210,731,776
CARE PACKAGES USED

28,455,680
TIMES PRESTIGED

9,284,048,721
HEADSHOTS

207,235,834
FLAGS CAPTURED

3 THINGS BLACK OPS II NEEDS TO FIX

Still superior to MW3, the original Black Ops is probably our favourite Call Of Duty game to date. Niggling problems still remain, however. These are the things that need to be fixed next time around



MATCHMAKING

Not in the sense that we're always pitted against players who are better than us (we're better than everyone, of course). Nope, we mean that moment of howling frustration when you join a game and, through no fault of your own, you're dropped into a losing side. Who are losing 200-0 on Headquarters.

When this happens, you've got two choices: quit out and take a loss or sit around and, bar a Herculean effort that would make Arnie in *Commando* proud, lose. Inevitably, you quit out, attempt to find a new game. Wherein you're dropped back into the same game, and everyone else laughs at you.

MAP ROTATION

It's so basic we can't believe that it hasn't been fixed, but you still can't really choose which map to play on. This is wrong. We're not saying that we pine for the old days of scrolling through trillions of underpopulated maps on a bland server list, but when we jump on for a quick game of Summit, we might want to play a quick game of Summit.

We can understand that Treyarch/IW might want to keep things fast and frantic (which is *COD*, essentially), but the fact you can choose your map on PC undermines all of that. Allow us to choose basic variables like map and gametype and we'll love you forever. Maybe.



LAG

Okay, we know this one is tantamount to asking Treyarch to control the weather, but they've got enough money so we're going to do it anyway. The way lag is handled in *COD* is enough to make us snap our own arms in frustration: how many times have you found yourself emptying an entire magazine into a guy and he just stands there, turns around and casually blows you away like a particularly nonchalant *Bond* villain?

Too many times is the answer. We know lag is something beyond the control of the developer, but it can be mitigated, even if that's just a perception thing. And don't get us started on disappearing bullets and grenades...

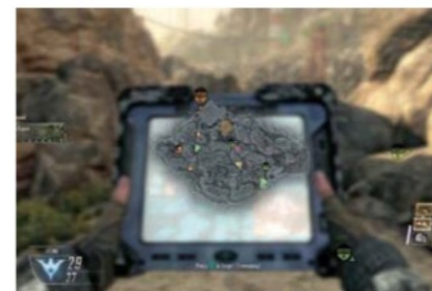


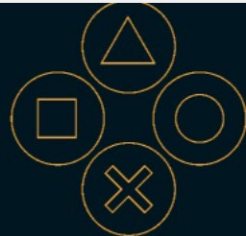
“ COULD BE THE STARTING POINT OF A FAR LARGER CHANGE THAN CUSTOM LOADOUTS AND SECURING HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS ”

> a small window showing the view of who you are following. There's talk that it will be possible to choose which pieces of HUD info can be seen and concentrated on. You can even listen into team chatter, although you're a braver person than we are if you dare to do so.

The final element is, of course, commentary. Think of all of those iconic sports moments that have been made even better thanks to someone blathering on like a mad fool over them. England in '66, Manchester United in '99, erm, other ones we can't quite think of here. *Black Ops II* is going to offer all of the above (although, unless knife-throwing and senseless swearing becomes the national pastime, maybe not as iconic) and not only that but also picture-in-picture capability. You'll be able to show your face as well as your super awesome commentary skills.

And when you tire of playing the role of broadcaster, you can jump into the action yourself for others to judge. Standard game modes won't be





streamed: instead players will have to hop into 'League Play'. With separate divisions based on the player's skill ranking, it's tailored like other sports, and is a good way to get people into the swing of streaming matches. Once you've participated, you're far more likely to watch.

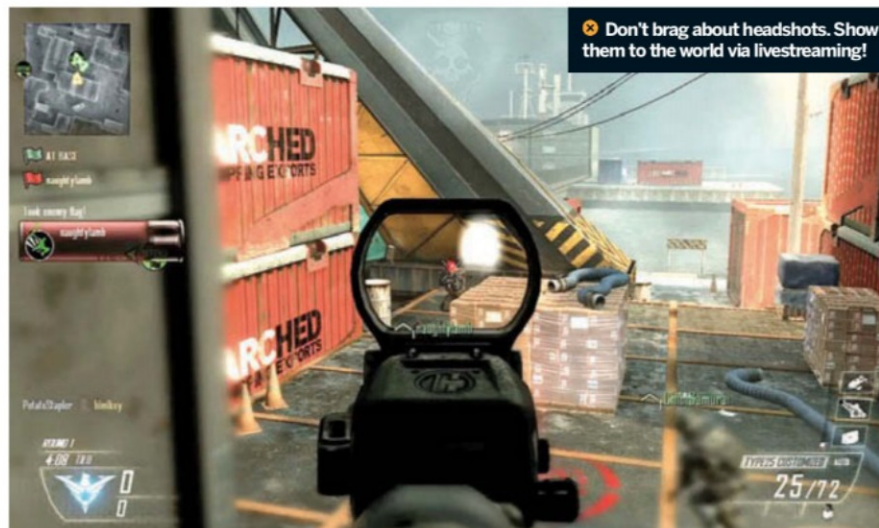
It's an ambitious undertaking, and one that runs counter to the usual chat about *Call Of Duty* never innovating. Again, no surprise: look closer at the original *Black Ops* and *Modern Warfare 3* and you can see that it's Treyarch, not the much-lauded Infinity Ward, that has been most interested in changing up its game. The theatre mode made its debut in *Black Ops*, and while it's nothing new to first-person shooter games, it was a much appreciated step up for the series. Not bad for a developer that was known as the B-squad for a while back there. Not that Vonderhaar cares.

"It's up to us as developers to make great games, and the rest will just happen. I try not to think about that stuff. I try to think about whether our studio is doing a great job and making great games, and the rest will happen for you."

"Treyarch's evolved a ton. There's a lot more maturity and discipline and the level of commitment is insane."



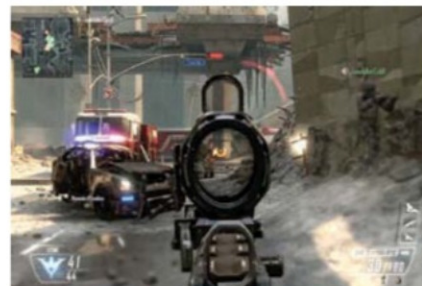
✖ The new scorestreak should change the dynamics of multiplayer.



✖ Don't brag about headshots. Show them to the world via livestreaming!

You will not, and I mean this, find a harder working group of people... you walk into the studio and everyone's fighting for what they think is the right thing for the game... you will get good decision-making out of that stuff."

Will everyone be coming home and flicking from *Eastenders* to *Call Of Duty* tournaments on our PS4s? No. But the money is there, the corporate



most people think. There are the aforementioned tournaments, as well as streaming internet services to watch them in your browser.

The thing is, unless it's right there, on the XMB or connected to the game's menu in some way, it's easy for streaming eSports to be lost in the crush of information. Like a peripheral, if it's not directly connected, you're less likely to use it, and developers are therefore less likely to program for it. But if, as we suspect, the option to watch is RIGHT THERE? Maybe something will come of this eSports lark after all.

Are eSports definitely the future for everyone? Perhaps not. But Treyarch happens to think the time is right for enough people to get serious about stepping up its e-sport presence. If its faith is rewarded, don't be surprised if the next PlayStation you own enables you to watch the new *COD* as easily as you play it. ✖

WILL EVERYONE BE COMING HOME AND FLICKING FROM EASTENDERS TO CALL OF DUTY TOURNAMENTS? NO. BUT THE MONEY IS THERE



✖ Watching the world's best players is the way forward for multiplayer.

backing is there, and the technology is there. Crucially, *Call Of Duty* is there, and *COD* could sell an entire truckload of ice to the Eskimos given the right delivery method.

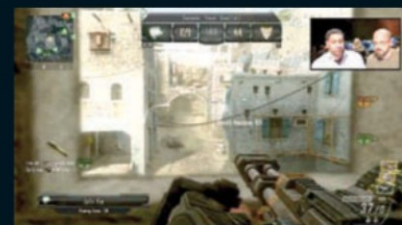
It's not the first game to toy with the idea, but it is by far the highest profile (*Just Cause 2* had an 'upload to YouTube' feature), and the eSports movement is already larger than



THE PROFESSIONAL

How Major League Gaming and its competitors paved the way for CODcasting

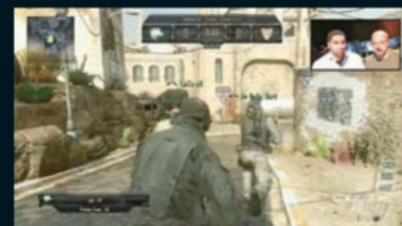
■ For every *COD* addict out there (and also, occasionally, sane people) it must seem like the perfect job: go around the world, play *COD*, shoot people, get money. It might sound fanciful, but if you've got the skills, then Major League Gaming and its ilk can make those dreams a reality.



■ Founded in 2002 and headquartered in New York, MLG's structure and prominence means that, along with fighting game tourney Evo, it's one of the most visible pro-gamer tourneys out there. Prize funds can be around the \$200,000 mark and it offers free web streaming of matches, along with occasional shows broadcast on ESPN.



■ Set up in a proper tournament structure, with different ladders, it seems the perfect home for *COD*. Which is strange, then, that *Black Ops* has been dropped from the organisation's selection of featured titles, allegedly over a funding dispute between MLG and PlayStation.



■ Not that we imagine Treyarch spent too much time worrying about it. With MLG and the like proving that the audience is there, and with other organisations such as the European Gaming League covering *COD* gaming, Activision is perfectly primed to capture a growing market. If the publisher throws in the ability to watch matches and tinker with all of the options available to you via *Black Ops III* / *COD Elite* this could be huge.

METAL GEAR SOLID: GROUND ZEROES

— ANALYSIS & SECRETS REVEALED —



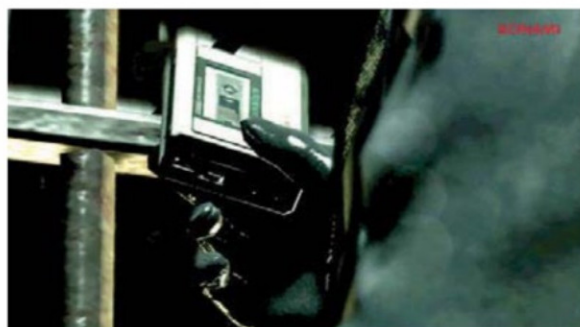
1 First up, a location. Cuba. "Camp Omega Maximum Security" says the sign, with a logo beneath the text that depicts an outline of Cuba in the Greek letter 'omega'. As the last letter of the Greek alphabet, 'omega' is often used to depict the 'last' or the 'end'.



2 If you were in any doubt, this grab proves that Camp Omega is being used as a military prison, similar to the modern day Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay. But who is our mystery man going to see?



3 We're almost certain that this is Chico from *MGS: Peace Walker*. Here's a comparison. Later on in the video, it's revealed that Snake is infiltrating the camp to rescue Chico. This has to be him in *Ground Zeroes*. Trouble is, he hasn't aged that much from *Peace Walker*. Maybe *Ground Zeroes* doesn't take place too long after the end of *Peace Walker*. We'll come back to this point later.



4 Anyway, our mystery man hands Chico a cassette player, explaining that it's a reward for him betraying someone. The player has an 'auto reverse' function, which didn't come into production until the mid-Eighties, so that puts the time period somewhere after 1985.



5 Chico has his own headphones already... but they're plugged into his chest. He appears to be listening to his own heartbeat? It also looks quite red around the area where he's plugged the headphones in and there's (maybe) a bandage further down his torso. And a dressing on his forehead. Has he been operated on recently?



6 As our mystery man turns away, he appears to be surrounded by rats. Are these just in the base or are they attracted to him? His name is Ratman! Okay, maybe not, but this character could have some kind of affinity to the creatures, as The Pain did with bees in *MGS3*.

WHO IS RATMAN?



PSYCHO MANTIS

Firstly the timeline is wrong. *Ground Zeroes* has to be set before the original *Metal Gear Solid*... so he went from melted face to smooth face with a few scars? Also, he doesn't display any of the Psycho Mantis characteristics: the floating, the mind reading, the whiney voice... We're pretty sure that this isn't Psycho Mantis.



VOLGIN

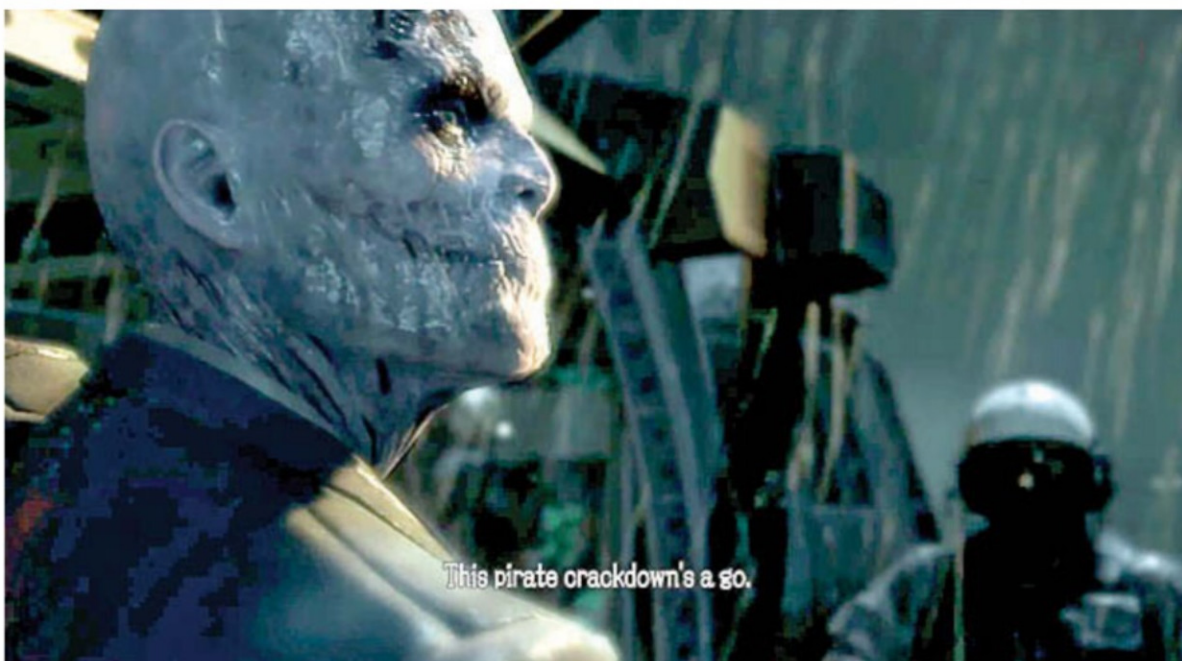
Could it be Volgin, from *Metal Gear Solid 3*? If you remember, Volgin died at the end of *MGS3* when he was struck by lightning. He then burned to death. The last we see of him is as a smouldering heap... death not confirmed! Also, it could just be Decoy Octopus disguised as someone else. Kojima always said that character was under-used in *Metal Gear Solid*...



7 And we see Ratman's badge reflected in the mirror of the jeep, showing us that it's the FOX logo. Why are we not surprised...



8 Okay, now Ratman puts on a hat (it's been raining all this time, so why now?), which looks a lot like the hat worn by Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*. A reference to the movie? Or does it just denote a rank? There's actually a reference to *Apocalypse Now* in the gameplay section, when later on Big Boss calls in a helicopter, and the helicopter is playing Wagner's *Rise Of The Valkyries* just like Kilgore's 'copter in the film.



9 The hat comes off and then we see Ratman for the first time. It looks like this is a brand new character in the *MGS* series, although Kojima did tweet a while back about resurrecting an old *MGS* character. It's not outside the realms of possibility that this is an old character, albeit horribly burned. Some people have suggested that this is Major Zero, Snake's handler from *Metal Gear Solid 3*. It's possible, given that Major Zero and Snake go their separate ways after the Snake Eater mission in *MGS3* for a while then Zero forms The Patriots with Ocelot, Snake and Eva. They then embark on the cloning project that gives birth to Solid, Liquid and Solidus Snakes. Big Boss, unhappy at the cloning, leaves The Patriots to form the Militaires Sans Frontières. Could *Ground Zeroes* pit Snake's MSF against Zeroes' Patriots?



10 And we get our first glimpse of Big Boss. But it's not quite how we're expecting him. He looks old. As he reaches the top of a cliff climb, we see grey hair and...



11 It's old Snake! Again! Compare this Snake with the one in the artwork. Eyepatches are cool. We want one.



12 Now we're really confused. It's definitely still Big Boss – with the eye patch over his right eye – but now he's old? So who's that in the artwork? Does this mean that *Ground Zeroes* could be set in the early Nineties?



13 Then we get a caption: "Snake is back on FOX". Does this mean that Snake is back working with the Fox unit? He's wearing both a FOX badge and an MSF one? Bit of freelancing for the US Government, perhaps? So, who is that he's talking to?



14 Okay, this part has been confirmed: as mentioned earlier, the person he's talking to on the radio is Kaz Miller, Big Boss's handler in *Peace Walker*. He's played by the same Japanese voice actor, so this is certain.

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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score

RELEASE DATE: 18 NOVEMBER

Resident Evil 6

Don't call it a comeback...



You can't be all things to all people. We don't know who said that phrase. We even spent at least ten seconds looking it up on the internet and if the internet doesn't know, then it means no-one in the world knows. All we can say is that it definitely isn't someone who has seen the insides of Capcom's hallowed halls, which instead resonate with famous quotes like "Can we put Ryu in it?" and "We can sell it as DLC!"

But lo! Capcom is taking on mission impossible and decided that *Resident Evil 6* can be all things to all people. *Love Resident Evil 4*? We've got your back! Obsessed with testosterone-soaked cover shooters? We'll hook you up! Quietly a fan of *Operation Raccoon City*? Well, quite. Best keep it quiet. You're just *weird*.

The point is that Capcom has carved *Resident Evil 6* up into four huge slices, each with its own distinct flavour of action and quirks, each designed to appeal to a different audience. Leon and Helena, Jake and Sherry, Chris and Piers, and Ada Wong. Four separate sections, four ways of playing through *Resident Evil*, one cute marketing bulletpoint. There's obvious crossover here as ultimately, it's still a game where you point your gun at zombies and pull the trigger – it's not like Leon and Helena have the tennis mini-game while Ada Wong has the karting bit. Even so, there are enough distinct differences that you can enjoy them as fully separate campaigns, each with their own identity.

It also helps that sections are kept entirely separate, so much so that they're actually offered up as different menu options before you start playing. There's no starting off as Leon, now you're Jake, now you're Chris, now you're... yes, back to Leon! Instead, these are walled-off campaigns, with only the storyline and cut-scenes linking the three together.

Leon and Helena are up first in the tutorial-disguised-as-a-prologue, as you're whisked through how the combat and inventory system works. The former is easy enough – aim gun, shoot gun, melee if they get close – but it's



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
In-house
Price
£54.99
Players
1-2

Genre
Survival horror
Age Rating
18

Website
residentevil.com
Twitter
@Capcom_Unity
Facebook
www.facebook.com/capcomunity

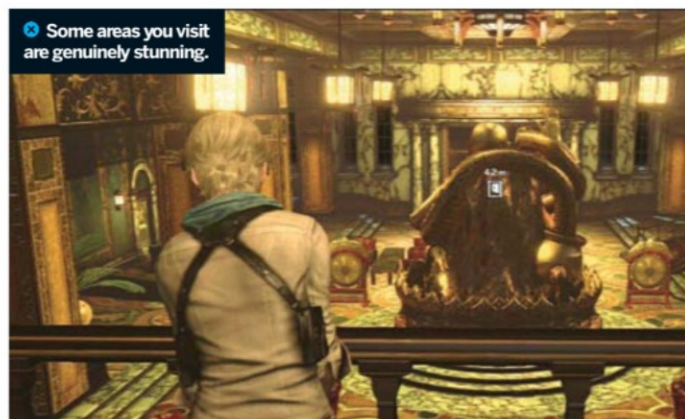
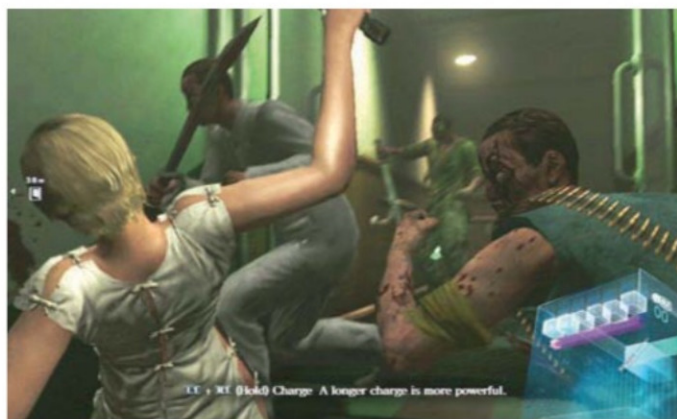
the latter that shows the first real signs of progress for the series. You scroll through your

weapons on the D-pad, while tapping Triangle brings up your items. You can combine green and red herbs in traditional Resi-style, before slapping your herbal concoction in a pillbox, ready to heal you with a quick tap of R2.

It's a slick, sparse and minimal system that sees the series finally have the confidence to sever ties with its cumbersome inventory system of old. Anyone who played *Resident Evil 5* will know that selecting the right item under pressure demanded inventory dexterity that required painful gymnastics from your thumb, as you ended up selecting

This is a refreshing showcase of Capcom's ambition rather than going through the same old Resident Evil mentions

a proximity mine rather than a first-aid spray, threw it on the floor in blind panic and then blew yourself up. Online co-op means no real way to 'pause' the action to sort through your pockets and it's an area Capcom never quite solved. With *Resident Evil 6*, everything is quickly accessible with a few D-pad taps. There's nothing about "They got the inventory system right!" that will make you punch the air in shoulder-popping excitement, but it's an obvious plus that Capcom has managed to solve one of modern *Resident Evil*'s biggest weaknesses.



Some areas you visit are genuinely stunning.





✖ Fight or flee? You'll soon have that question answered for you...



Resident Evil 6

When the tutorial ends, it's likely you'll want to continue with Leon and Helena once you're given the choice of who you want to begin your real *Resident Evil 6* adventure. Following a dramatic intro introducing us to the pair's storyline, the duo quietly plod and pick their way through the spookily empty Ivy University, questioning where all the students have gone, as thunder throws quick flashes of light across the mahogany halls and abandoned dining tables. It's a masterclass in building tension. Capcom is in no hurry to get to the action and the setting is so dense with detail and atmosphere, neither is the player. That you've clearly been dropped in the middle of *something* only adds to the mystery of the situation, giving your brain time to play amateur detective, piecing together the clues in the environment around you, steeling yourself for the moment when zombies smash violently through the quiet.

Eventually the inevitable happens, as Leon and Helena encounter zombies in the most dramatic of ways. It's here that the difference between *Resident Evil 5* and *Resident Evil 6* is most apparent. Where the former suffered an identity crisis and tried to reach for big, ballsy action yet refused to abandon its stiff, survival horror roots, *Resident Evil 6* has the slick control that allows Capcom to really crank up the pace. Zombie ambushes, tumbling buses, dogs snapping at you from behind >



✖ Different enemies require different tactics, keeping you on your toes.

TAP, TAP, DEAD

Why the new inventory system actually works

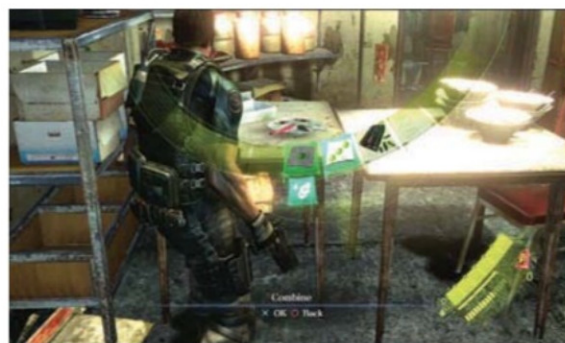
RESIDENT EVIL 5

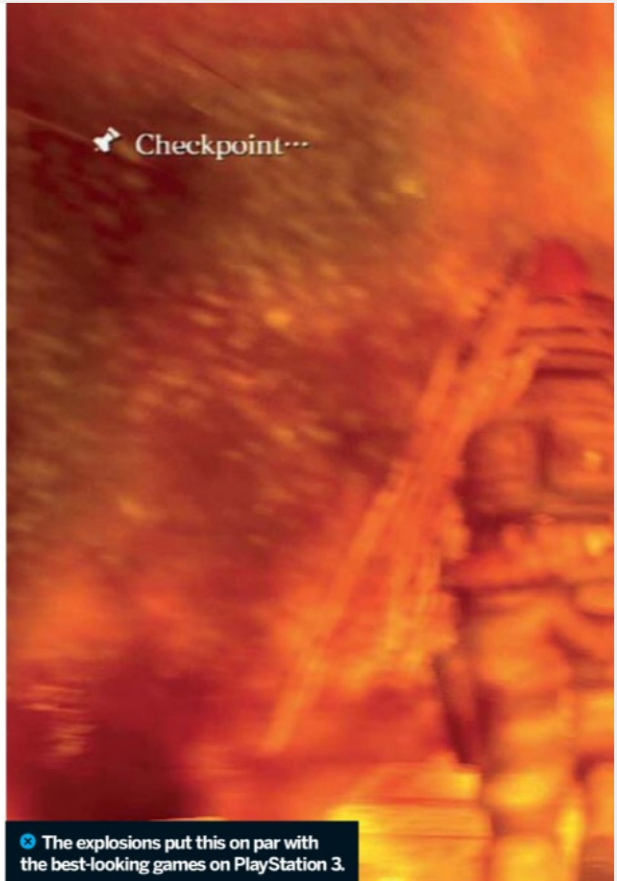
The awkward grid system of old was horrendous. Most players would have 'open inventory, up/down/left/right on D-pad, use item' wired into muscle memory, which meant you then had to spend time arranging the grid so the items were exactly where you wanted them to be. Great fun when zombies are attacking.



RESIDENT EVIL 6

Items are kept separate from weapons and everything is accessible on a wheel. Triangle skips through your weapons and healing items are available on R2. It's a system that's quick and easy to use, which makes sense, given the always online, co-op environment of the game.





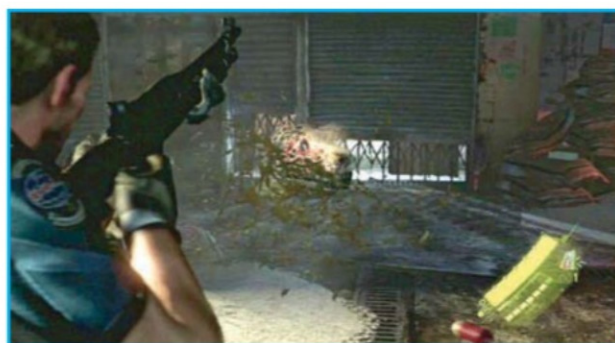
BOSS BATTLE DISSECTED

It's you versus a pretty-flippin'-solid snake. How do you kill the bastard?



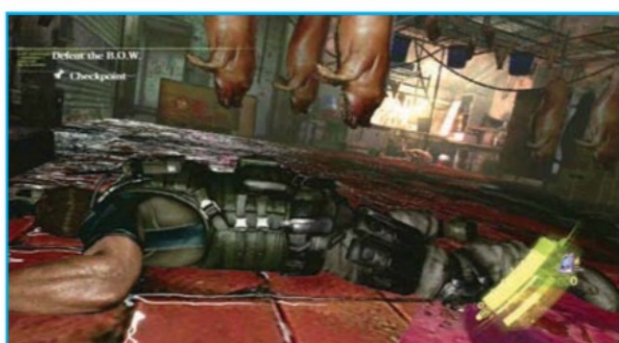
A NEW CHALLENGER

After chasing the B.O.W. through Chinese slums, made harder by its tendency to camouflage by turning invisible, suddenly you emerge face to face with the creature.



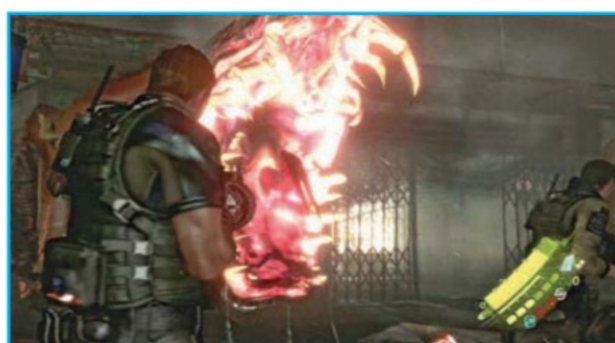
WHERE ARE YOU?

The snake only appears when shot at, but the challenge is finding it. The red laser of your gun distorts when shone through it, which gives you an obvious clue, as does knocked over debris as it passes by.



FACE DOWN

The snake can snap at you with its jaws or try to crush you, prompting a wiggle-the-stick-to-escape QTE. Most annoyingly, it can whip you to the floor, which usually happens when you lose sight of the creature.



MASSIVE DAMAGE

Its weak spot is its mouth, easily hit as it screams when hit anywhere on its body. The tough part is finding the room to actually get a clear shot at it, thanks to the claustrophobic areas the fight takes place in.



NEED AMMO

When you run out of ammo, you have to scramble through the tunnels to the next room to smash boxes open to grab more. The problem? Snakes like tunnels too and it's the perfect place to ambush you...



THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

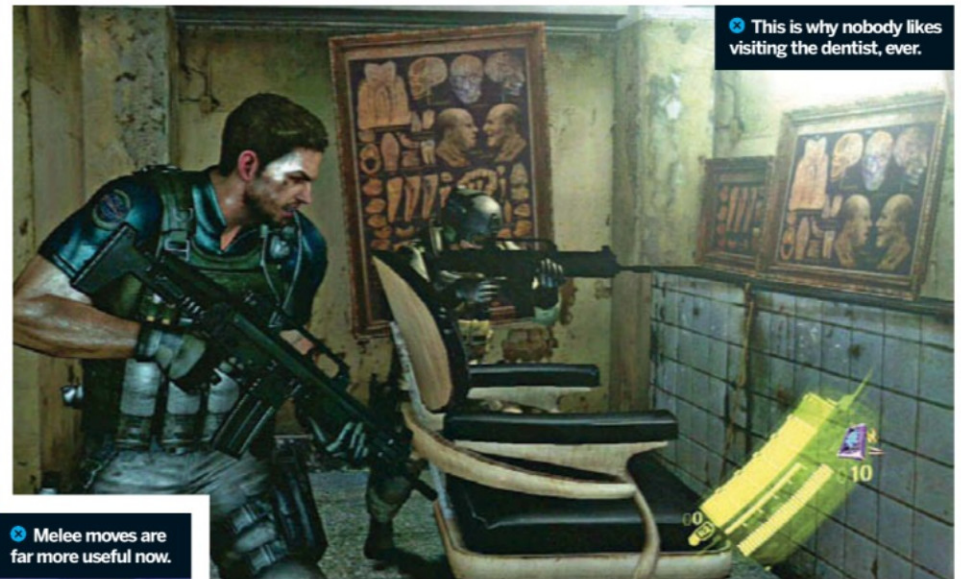
Eventually, you drive the snake to its lair, where the final part of the battle takes place. How do you kill it? We won't spoil everything here but let's just say a bright spark would figure this one out pretty quickly...

> gravestones, dodging trains... it's the sort of action that never would have been possible with the old *Resident Evil* framework, seeing as that had to be designed around the stilted movement that the series grew up with. Leon and Helena can turn, shoot, fight, and attack as well as in any third-person action game, with only the slightly awkward turning-while-running mechanic that sees you hitting walls more often than you like being a real giveaway of the series' past.

Sometimes you'll catch yourself groaning (like a zombie HA) at the cheap tricks inserted to trip you up. Lifeless zombies are scattered around Ivy University but even though you know they're going to try the old oooh-we've-come-to-life-we're-trying-to-grab-you-oooh routine, headshots don't work until you've walked close enough to trigger them. Sometimes it's all too easy to spot a jump scare lying behind a slowly opening door, which saps those sections of surprise.

What's lost in cheap tricks is made up for with different types of enemies. The zombies progress from the hoodies-and-hats attire of the campus students to the skinless freaks prowling the catacombs that Leon and Helena land in, while special zombies also show up and force a change of tactics. One type can only be killed with a direct shot to its heart, the rest of its body impenetrable muscle and bone. Another distorts your view with screams, lungs flapping around outside of its chest. When crossing rope bridges linking underground tombs, you'll be stopped by a fat zombie jumping up and down to throw you off balance, knocking you out of your aiming animation and demanding shots to the leg to cripple it. It's nothing revolutionary but it allows Capcom to keep things fresh and mix up the tactics demanded of you.

Jake and Sherry are next, and their time in the spotlight is host to Capcom's more ambitious ideas. Jake is a mercenary and the son of Wesker while Sherry Birkin, who first appeared in *Resident Evil 2* as a 12-year-old, is



now an agent for the DSO. Without spoiling things, their storyline and interaction is actually the most interesting of the three and the scenarios they end up in are a reflection on that. Jake can flip himself around on monkey bars while Sherry can't, which means Jake and Sherry's levels sometimes suffer from a conveniently-placed-bar-to-split-up-the-duo tactic. Fortunately, Capcom has other ideas that stretch beyond that. One section sees Jake protecting an unarmed Sherry Birkin using a remote gun camera, with a clever puzzle solution for Jake if he pays attention to what his partner is doing.

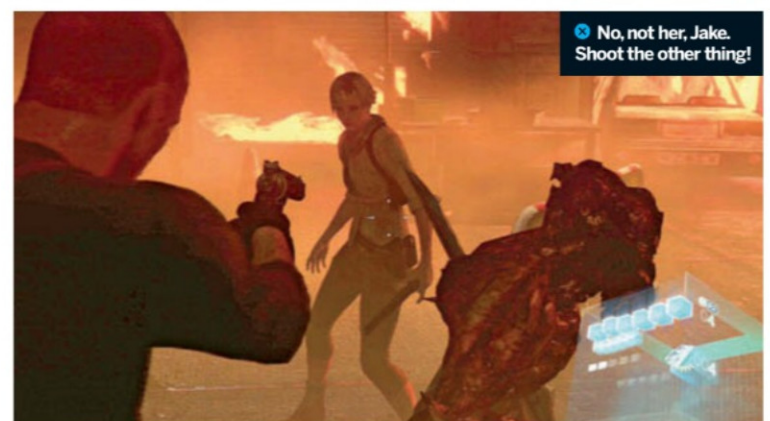
Jake also has a melee style, selected in the same way he'd choose a gun. Holding down L1 puts him in a melee stance and holding R1 allows him to charge a palm strike, and when released he runs at his opponent to smash them in the face. There are further combinations he can do using melee strikes, including elbows and flip-kicks, and it's more practical than it sounds – it serves as an interesting way to save on the scarce ammo

in their scenario and provides a refreshing change of pace. Sometimes the ideas work (Jake's melee style) and sometimes they don't (an ill-fitting motorbike section). What's consistent is that the moment-to-moment gameplay in their sections constantly change, a refreshing showcase of Capcom's ambition

Set-pieces from boss fights against giant snakes to outrunning helicopter gunfire across rickety boats in China

rather than going through the same old *Resident Evil* mentions.

Which, oddly, is what threatens to puncture the package when Chris Redfield and new boy Piers show up to take their turn in the spotlight. The duo have come to represent the series' shift from horror to action, the cynical attempt to appeal to those gamers raised on a diet of Western cover shooters. The first few hours in the company of Chris and Piers do little to discourage that thought, as they rattle through inane dialogue and meaningless shooting gallery set-pieces with gusto. The funnelneck design leaves little >



> room for exploration or tactics or anything besides racing forward towards the next encounter, where it's often the speed of your trigger finger that separates success and failure. There's not much variation in what's demanded of you, while co-op interaction is rarely more than the two partners meeting up at metal doors. It's not awful, thanks to the satisfying feedback of the guns themselves, but it's more *Time Crisis* than *Resident Evil*. The atmosphere is oddly flat and while the pace is high, it's at the expense of substance. It's a move that leaves their sections feeling hollow, as you're either shooting down a corridor or you're wheeling around a room firing at everything that moves.

Then Capcom suddenly remembers this is its biggest game since forever and it pulls its finger out, unleashing a barrage of set-pieces ranging from boss fights against giant snakes to outrunning helicopter gunfire across

rickety boats in China to on-rails shooting sections that actually feel engaging. Gasp! Their chapters become a brutal survival challenge, with the two placed under extreme duress and forced to rely on their muscle and firepower to get out of trouble. It's not horror but it's strong, confident co-op action powered by some of the best-looking visuals on PS3.

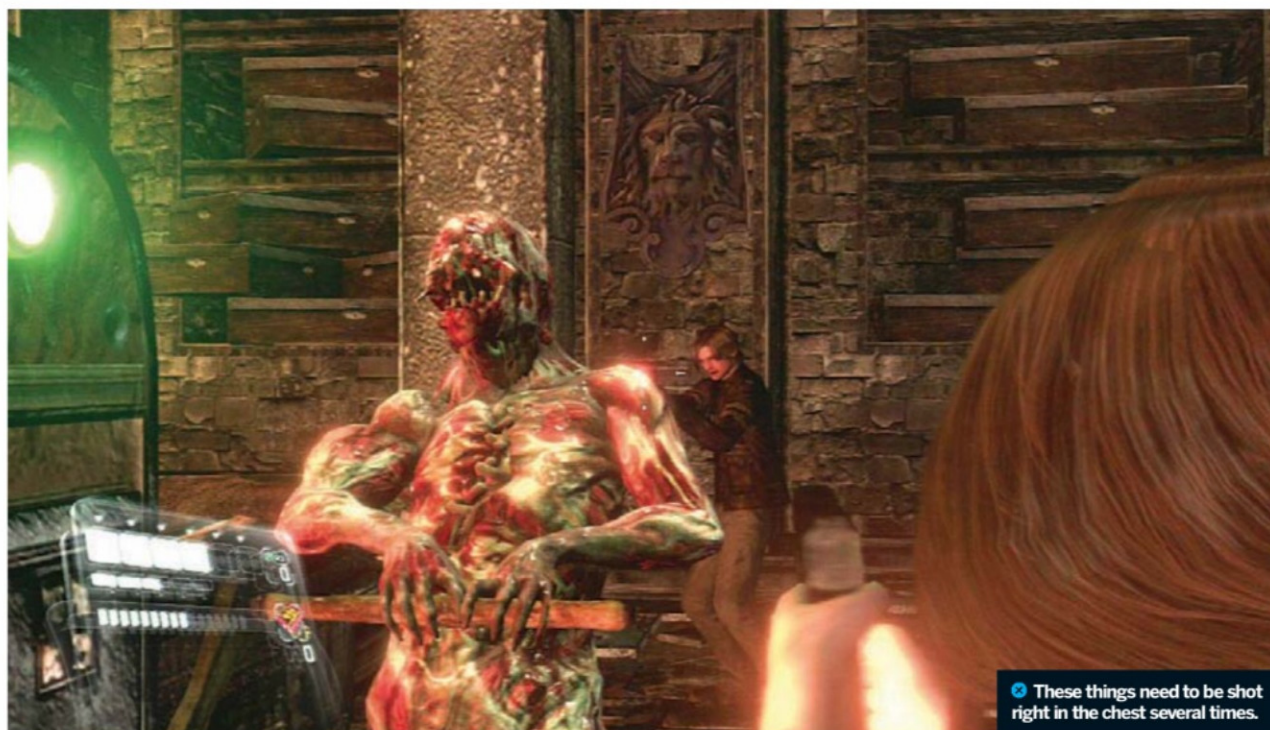
Finally, there's Ada Wong. Unlocked after completing the campaign, Ada is there to add extra context around the story and fill out the sections where she swoops in (sometimes literally) on the other characters as they play through their levels. She's the most confident of all the cast and her crossbow means the gameplay feels different to everything that's come before it, the fire-then-reload mechanic forcing you to approach enemies with an air of caution rather than the out-and-out chaos of the other sections.

Capcom even toys with the idea of stealth but it doesn't work too well, given the nature of the cover controls. In *Uncharted*, you take cover by pressing a button. In *Resident Evil 6*, you have to aim, then push into the wall by aiming, then move to the edge of the wall to see around the corner but you have to stop immediately otherwise Ada spins around, crossbow poised, with "LOOK I'M HERE!" written on her forehead in bright, neon letters. It's not the most successful of stealth mechanics and mercifully, it's neither a forced game over for any alerts nor is it an idea that's too persistent.

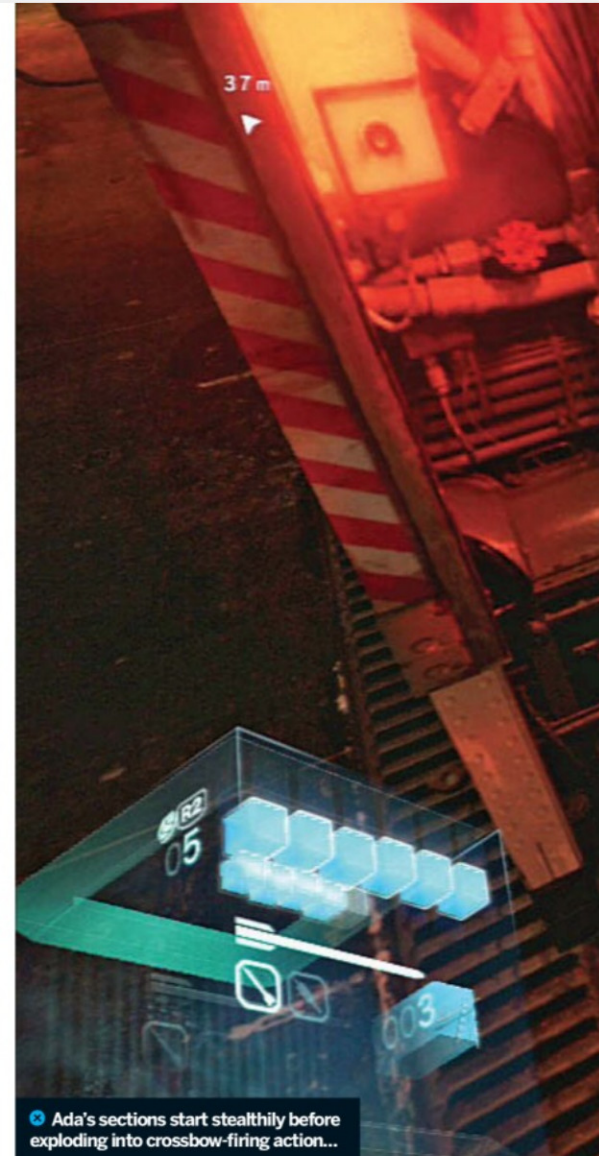
Ada Wong is alone, too. With no co-op partner in tow, it's surprising how much of an impact this has. There's the obvious difference, such as how the tension and drama



• Jake's melee moves make him the more fun to play of this pair.



• These things need to be shot right in the chest several times.



• Ada's sections start stealthily before exploding into crossbow-firing action...

is cranked up simply because you can no longer fall back on the luxury of an extra pair of hands backing you up. No partner to split up the enemy's attention, no second gun to double your firepower, no helping hand when you tumble to the floor.

It's also the impact on level design, as Capcom no longer needs to cater for two players. Ada's chapters are tightened up, and maze-like labyrinths, swimming sections, all sorts are thrown in. Given Capcom has recently been slicing up its games into bitesize DLC ribbons – *Street Fighter x Tekken* deserves its own section on PSN Store for the continuous vomit of DLC spraying from its general direction – Ada Wong's campaign is a surprisingly generous addition. When you consider that each section already weighs in at six to eight hours long, there's a lot of meat on *Resident Evil 6*'s bones. This is before we even take the collectibles, Mercenaries and Agent Hunt into consideration, stretching its life even further.

The inevitable question – is *Resident Evil 6* a return to the horror roots of the series? You know the answer already. You knew it when you saw the trailers, heard the interviews, saw the screenshots and we can confirm it now, this isn't a game that will have you cowering behind the sofa in fear. It's an action game with a horror theme. There are some effective jump scares. There are tense moments. However, there isn't anything that really makes you dread what lies ahead. It's a game that has now slipped away from horror territory and into action territory. Your biggest fear is running out of bullets, not running into disfigured creatures.

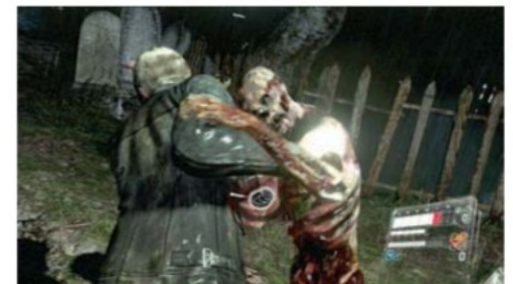




▶ Resident Evil 6

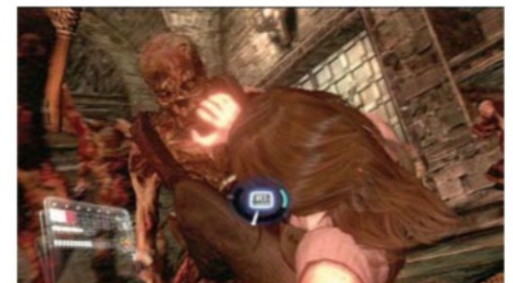


WILL YOU HATE THESE QTES?



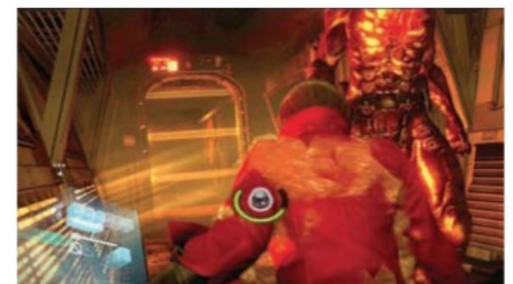
THE MASHED QTE – YES

It happens whenever you get too close to a zombie or jumped by a dog, and so on. Fine in isolation, but this is the fastest way to knacker your pad.



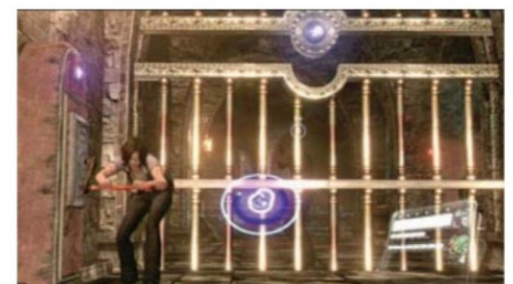
THE TIMED QTE – YES

It makes sense in some situations, such as steadying your aim before taking a shot, but whenever it appears in high pressure, panicked situations like these? It doesn't really reflect how you think you'd react in that situation.



THE ESCAPE QTE – NO

Some enemies spit all over you and leave you trapped in their goo, unable to move. The difference between this and the mashed QTE? It rarely happens



THE CO-OP QTE – NO

Usually just opening a gate. We like opening gates!

This is balanced to some degree by the difficulty. It's not scary but it is surprisingly tough, thanks to a scarcity of bullets and abundance of enemies who can soak them up. One saving grace is how strong melee moves are and you can plough through small crowds of weaker zombies with fist and foot alone, something that wasn't an option in previous *Resident Evils* when you were rooted to the spot, swiping the air with a knife like you were swatting flies. Yet you're always aware of how many bullets you have left and the need to think about what you're doing.

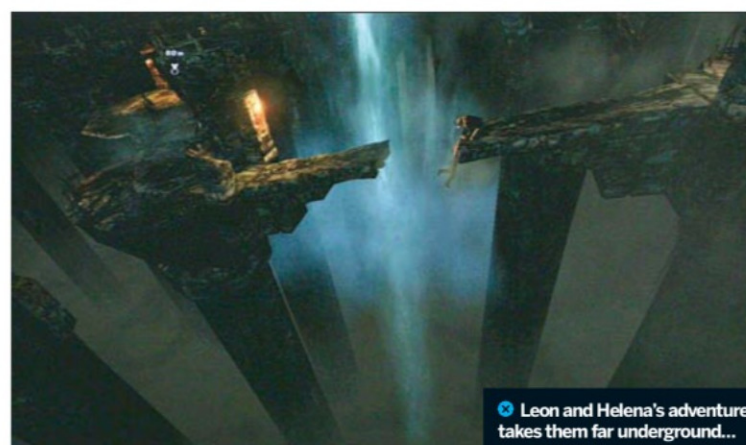
What all the sections share in common is the same theme that runs through *Resident Evil 6* – this is a brilliant action game, marred only by rough patches where Capcom attempts ideas that don't quite work. It's not the best *Resident Evil* game but how could it be after *Resident Evil 4*? Instead, this is arguably the best co-op game available on PlayStation 3 alongside *Borderlands 2*, and while long-term *Resident Evil* fans might still be disappointed by the nod towards action over horror, Capcom finally has the confidence and know-how to pull it off. It's big, it's brutal, it's ballsy and most of all, it's back.

Ryan King

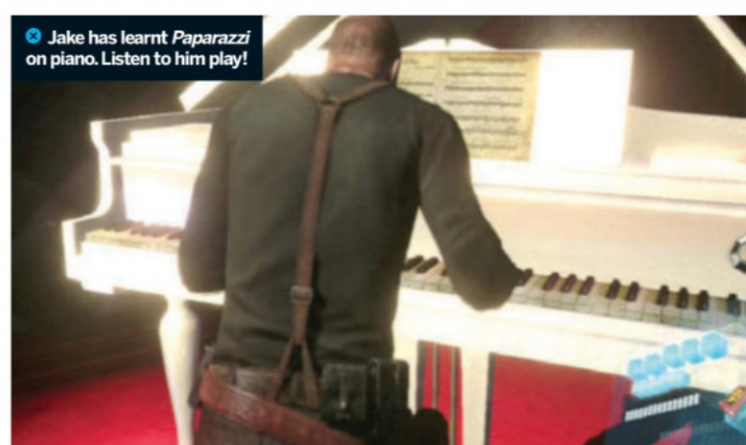
VERDICT

Odd rough patch or misfire aside, *Resident Evil 6* is bursting with innovation, content and confidence that shows Capcom knows exactly what it's doing with its series. Now fully toolled up for co-op, this feels like a *Resident Evil* worthy of modern times.

88%



▶ Leon and Helena's adventure takes them far underground...



▶ Jake has learnt *Paparazzi* on piano. Listen to him play!



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Gunzerker ability is generally great, as long as you don't accidentally equip a sniper rifle as one of the two weapons. Oops.

Borderlands 2

Oh, there ain't no rest for the wicked

PS3

In one hand you have a triple-barreled shotgun firing corrosive rounds that do 1000+ points of damage when you score a solid hit. In the other hand you have a minigun assault rifle peppering enemies at an incredible rate and coating them in 'slag', causing them to take more damage when hit with other projectiles. Your friends are stood around you, throwing down turrets to bolster attack, healing you, sending decoys to confuse the enemy and wielding weaponry just as insane as the ones you are currently pointing in the direction of the bad bastards.

But you're still getting overwhelmed.

Because this is *Borderlands 2* and, just like its forebear, this is a game that demands you play with three other people and – when you do – throws a metric effton of creatures, psychos, marauders, threshers, robots and bloody irritating rakk at you. It's something we didn't even realise we missed until we got back into the world of Pandora and picked off our first dozen-or-so bullymongs (yes, that is what they're called).

Ostensibly a first-person shooter, *Borderlands 2* brings back the underlying RPG roots of the original. What this means is levelling up your character, picking up bigger, better, stronger guns (or weaker, faster-firing ones. Or ones where the elemental effect offsets any negatives concerning its ammo capacity. Or... you get the picture) and generally dealing with a hell of a lot of numbers. Most of which literally fly about the screen as hell is unleashed on the denizens of this alien planet.

But it's not a complex game and, in fact, goes to some pains to make it easier on players who might not want to spend half their time comparing numbers (we do, for the record). Quick references pop up on screen when looking at new items to show you at a glance if you're looking at a better or worse deal, and it generally makes things work that bit faster than they did in the first game.

And that's essentially the general feel of *Borderlands 2*: things work a bit faster. A bit better. Ideas are more refined and thought through than before, from simple touches such as being able to converse with NPCs that bit more, to things like adding more variation to mission types (timed, failable, runs for example), and the addition of vehicles that can seat all four players in co-op.

Co-operative is the main meat here, never forget. *Borderlands 2* is a far more interesting and fun game than the first one was when played on your own, of that there can be no doubt. But you will become acutely aware of



DETAILS

Publisher
2K Games
Developer
Gearbox Software
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
First-person shooter
Age Rating
18
Website
borderlands2.com
Twitter
[@GearboxSoftware](https://twitter.com/GearboxSoftware)
Facebook
www.facebook.com/borderlandsgame



issues, of the trudge, of the fetch-quests and the bullet-sponge boss battles when pootling about with nary another ear to natter at.

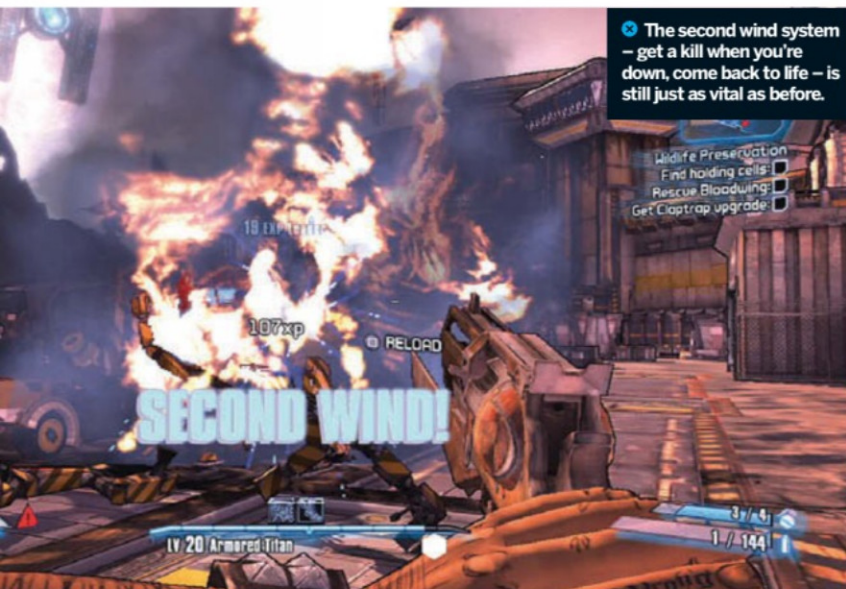
Throw in three other players – or two, or just one – and you have a captivating, fantastically moreish experience. What was once an irritating journey from A to B and back to A again becomes a comical road trip with chums, getting into scrapes and distractions that turn a 20-minute enjoyable romp on your lonesome into an hour-long epic full of the sorts of stories you just won't stop telling other friends. A battle against one of the aforementioned bullet sponges becomes a carefully orchestrated maelstrom of tactical thinking and renegade action ("Why are you... DON'T GUNZERKER YET IT'S A WASTE oh god he's Gunzerking..."). In short: co-operative play takes a good experience, though one sure to prove divisive when played alone, and turns it into a stupendously fun experience that will utterly



Or you could try



Deus Ex: Human Revolution Issue 209
Enjoy picking things up but have no friends? Sorted. 91%



TRAGEDY OF COMEDY

Original idea: talk about the storyline in a boxout!

THE STORY FOR the original was ignorable and shallow, and so is the story to the second, really. Thing is, you don't have to pay any attention to it – it's not exactly a cut-scene-heavy game and you sort of just tune out the ECHO messages as the game goes on. Or, you know, you can pay attention if you want. And if you do, you'll see *Borderlands 2* maybe isn't quite as funny as it tries to be. It's a decidedly *American* sense of humour, not that this in itself is a bad thing, and it left us feeling quite cold. It's not without its charms, though.



Throw in three other players and you have a captivating, fantastically moreish experience

murder your free time with the power of at least four hundred bazillion guns.

Does that mean *Borderlands 2* isn't worth getting if you don't have an internet connection or friends? Not really, no. It's a big part of the reason the score isn't quite as high as it might have been – you cannot discount the fact a lot of people will play the game alone, and a lot of people may well get bored of what they're doing as a result. Equally, a lot won't – a lot will love it. But it's still worth a go if you're a classic Billy No-Mates.

But if you're a normal person, with internet and friends, *Borderlands 2* is essential stuff. Even if you tired of the first game, the sequel offers more visual variety, interesting missions, likeable characters, puerile humour

and weapon-based tactics (guns exploding like grenades on reload: a Very Good Thing) to drag you in all over again.

Where *Borderlands* was 'sent out to die', *Borderlands 2* has been sent out to kill. And it does just that. It will easily be one of the best games released all year and the more we dream of that delicious four-player co-op, the more we think it's one of the top games this generation.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It turns out that a studio doing exactly what we expected it to do – make more, better, bigger, faster and better-looking stuff – can be a good thing. *Borderlands 2* is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.

90%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tekken Tag Tournament 2

Your new tag-team champion of the world



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
In-house
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Fighting
Age Rating
16+
Website
www.tekken.com
Twitter
@Harada_TKKEN
Facebook
facebook.com/tekken

PS3

We've never been dismissive of the *Tekken* series – in fact, some might say we're quite effusive with our praise. But we were ready to meet *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* with something approaching grudging anticipation. We wanted it. We wanted to play it. We were excited by what it would bring. But there was little heart; little genuine enthusiasm backing up this rote selection of responses to an upcoming sequel.

We've barely stopped playing *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* since it arrived. Now we have egg on our faces simply for not being excited enough in the first place. It's not often that happens.

Bringing together almost every character from *Tekken*'s past (we're missing Gon, mind you), *TTT2* is a huge love letter to one of the most-celebrated fighting franchises on PlayStation. If you've ever loved King's stalling suplex, Jack's Cossack dance, Lei's drunken master...ness or the fact that Kuma is a bear, you're likely to find something to love here.

Beyond just being a sequel to the ultimately throwaway original *Tekken Tag Tournament*, released back in the early days of the PS2, this is a more fleshed-out, less sideshow attraction version than what came before.

Players pick a team of two characters, as before, but this time around the duo is capable of more in the way of team attacks – some even specific to particular duos. Then there's the tag combos, which can be activated by using

Tekken 6's 'bound' moves, and add in switch-in, switch-out quick hits to keep things interesting. And more juggly, obviously.

Of course, you can always opt to go solo, which results in missing out on the tag-specific moves and combos and, of course, the ability to switch characters. But the bonus it brings is increased hitting power and the ability to take more hits before a KO. It's a balance, and it's one that adds yet another layer of strategic thinking to the game – one we hadn't even considered.

Aside from the aforementioned new elements, we're looking at *Tekken* as usual. It's less tech than the likes of *Virtua Fighter*, but that means it's a more open playing field for those of differing skill levels – even beginners are capable of beating the mighty **Play**, at least sometimes (N.B. only if they're spamming Eddy/Christie/Tiger/Hwoarang). It's a juggle frenzy of high-impact, spectacular moves from a well-balanced character set. There are the odd ones, here and there, that feel a bit off, and flying kicks are still hugely overpowered, but at no point did we feel we had selected a character that was utterly useless. Not even stupid, rubbish, boring Paul.

It's not just straight-up battering each other, though, with *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* offering a ton of content beyond its standard arcade and versus modes. The most interesting and – dare we say it – important addition has to be the Fight Lab.

Here players take control of Combot as they learn how to do basic, advanced and irritatingly difficult techniques in a number of challenges. It's aimed at getting newcomers accustomed to how *Tekken* plays in a more structured fashion than the more freeform training mode, but it offers something for experts too. Mainly because it's surprisingly difficult. But also because you can build Combot into your own character, bestowing the robo-brawler with the moves you see fit to give it and taking said creation into actual, proper fights. It's a really good system, which surprised us somewhat, and would be a welcome addition to many other fighting games.

You will, however, encounter a point when you want to throw *TTT2*, or your pad, or your console, or your TV, or your cat out of the window. This point is called 'When you fight the last boss.' We're undecided where she ranks in the bastard-o-meter when compared to Azazel or Jinpachi, but there's no doubting it is a challenge that removes much of the fairness and replaces it with cheap, impossible-to-avoid attacks and ridiculously-ranged hits.

But that, along with the remaining inability to accurately judge where Ogre's hitboxes are, doesn't exactly detract much of anything from the game as a whole. You'll be annoyed, you might even turn off out of sheer frustration, but this is less than a single per cent of the massive amount of game. It just doesn't matter.



KICK PAUL MORE. Stupid Paul.

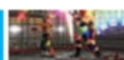


The Combot sections are fun and educational, handily.



Training is, of course, present for those who want to hone their skills.

Or you could try



Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown Issue 220
More technically-minded? This'll suit you better: **90%**



Tekken Tag Tournament 2



THE WINDS OF FASHION

Or: the hurricane of style

THROUGHOUT YOUR BRAWLS you will be constantly picking up credits. "But why?" you might wonder, "what could I possibly do wi..." YOU CAN BUY A SIREN TO PUT ON YOUR HEAD. Play dress-up and make badass characters look like idiots. Give King weird real animal legs. Give the raptor Alex a T-Rex head. In fact, more than just messing about with how the characters look, you can also give them usable weapons, like a paint gun or trombone. It's wilfully dumb in the most part, but it does give you more personal ownership on the characters you'll inevitably take online.



Because there's so much elsewhere to love, to enjoy, to lose yourself to for those glorious 20-minute blocks where nothing outside just playing a game matters. So much to practice (King has *other* throwing combos?), so many nuances of the tag system to pick up on, so much timing to perfect and so, so many wigs to put on dinosaurs. *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* will last you a long time, and all throughout that long time you'll be having a good one. Once again, we're being quite effusive with our praise. **Ian Dransfield**

VERDICT

Far from being the sideshow attraction the word 'spin-off' might suggest, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is actually pretty damn brilliant. Some brilliant underlying mechanics support a generous amount of content in a package that helps you realise sometimes you just want to play a game.

90%



The game is a looker when it wants to be.

Or you could try

Super Street Fighter IV Issue 191
It looks 3D, but it's actually one of the best 2D fighting games on PS3. 90%

RELEASE DATE: 28 SEPTEMBER

FIFA 13

Apathy, exhaustion, tactical defending and Titus Bramble



What's the biggest and best new addition to *FIFA 13*? Well, it's a subtraction, actually. No longer do we have Wayne "Pretty Boy" Rooney's face staring at us all the time when the game is loaded up. Instead we're now met with the handsome young face of one Lionel Messi. It's a big change, we have to admit.

Alright, that's possibly slightly facetious on our part, as EA Canada has once again gone

The fact of the matter is *FIFA 13* is brilliant fun, noted complaints aside

out of its way to improve and iterate upon what came last year. As it did the time before, the time before, the time before, and so on and so forth. But unlike last year where these changes resulted in the rather divisive addition of 'tactical defending', *FIFA 13* instead sees us returning to the realm of smaller, more iterative updates. There's no knockout punch feature that makes this a must-buy for owners of the

last game, nor is there enough to draw back lapsed fans who might have given up.

There's still a damn good game of football, though. There's still the chance to take part in some beautiful, flowing and satisfying kick-ball. There's still the satisfaction of sneaking that last-minute flukey winner you absolutely did not deserve. There's still Tony Hibbert.

Still, back to those changes. The big one this year is the first-touch control system, which makes for more realistic takes by players when the ball comes to them. In practice? Well, it means

sometimes they miscontrol it. And sometimes it happens for no discernible reason. It adds a touch (pun!) of realism, no doubt, but it also adds something we sort of assumed existed anyway in the game for years. Who knew?

But the best improvement (that's barely been talked about) we can think of is the modification to tactical defending. While last year it broke the experience for many (regardless of EA's "95



DETAILS

Publisher
EA Sports
Developer
EA Canada
Price
£49.99
Players
1-22
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
3+
Website
fifa.easports.com
Twitter
@EASPORTSFIFA
Facebook
facebook.com/easportsfifa

per cent of players preferred it" non-scientific random number nonsense), this year it has had systems built up around it to support the framework introduced in *FIFA 12*.

While last time out you would see defenders stabbing their feet aimlessly in whatever direction they were facing, this time around they make the effort to at least swing in the direction of the player they're trying to tackle. It's the little things.

Not only do they lunge better, but there's a push and pull system that – when used intelligently – can impact seriously on the effectiveness of your defence or attack, and the simple act of muscling a smaller player off the ball is far more natural a process than it was before. Basically it seems as though problems introduced last time around have been fixed – whether that's a totally good thing, we're not entirely sure (should the problems exist in the first place? Hmm).

Then there are other little nips and tucks that make attacking a more rounded process. Close control dribbling has been included, brought in from *FIFA Street* (though toned down, naturally) and allowing players to face up to defenders all the time while holding onto the ball. Then there's swifter, sometimes-automatic implementation of neater control when approaching the edge of the opposition half, meaning the players that can – your Ibrahimovic and Agueros of the world – can skip through defenders if those controlling them are quick enough on the sticks. It's well-balanced against the new defensive initiatives to help make neither side of the coin feel overpowered. And the middle of the park? Well, it feels as irrelevant and ignored as it always has in *FIFA*.

The fact this is the better game than last year's *FIFA 12* may make for confusing reading when scores are compared. But while the improvements are there – they are both



Former PES poster boy Leo Messi is now, well, FIFA's poster boy. There you go.

Or you could try



PES 2013 Issue 223
They've done it – they've made PES worth playing again, possibly at the expense of FIFA. **88%**



First-touch control means sometimes you'll miscontrol the ball. Which is nice.



The traitorous Arteta here, being traitorous.



necessary and well implemented – backing it all up is a game that just isn't changing in any real way. And that introduces more confusion: does EA need to mix things up a great deal to justify these yearly, full-price releases?

Maybe it's the fatigue of this generation catching up with us. Maybe it's an irritation with the iterative process of updates – and the fact you're expected to shell out full price every time for what could realistically be called a patch (admittedly, it would be a content-rich patch). Maybe we're just getting a bit bored of playing the same old FIFA. Maybe the series needs a PES-style kick up the backside to push it into action so it can be truly great again.

Maybe this, maybe that. The fact of the matter is FIFA 13 is brilliant fun, noted complaints aside. It's just this time around the competition has done a fine job of highlighting the cracks and seams in EA's patchwork of updates and ideas. FIFA's still great, but it has to be looking over its shoulder more than it has been in recent years.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

On one hand it's one of the best entries to the series. On the other hand it's pretty much the same game again, for £50. It's brilliant when it wants to be, infuriating at times, and is becoming ever less essential with each yearly update.

82%

Close-control dribbling is useful, but only if you're good enough to use it right.



SKILL THRILL

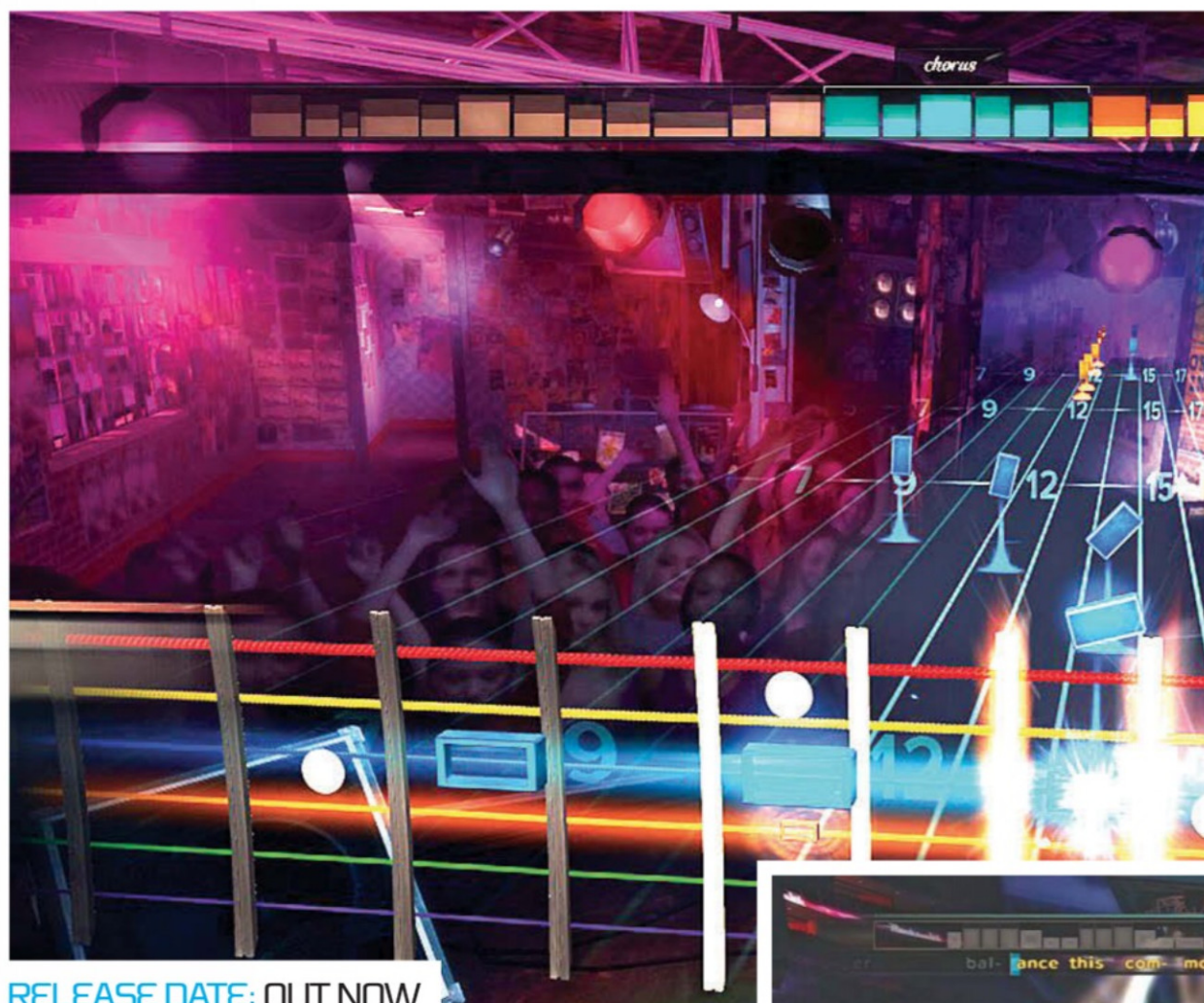
Stepping out of the arena

ONE OF THE smaller additions to FIFA 13 that we didn't even know we wanted to see is the addition of skill mini-games. Whereas before loading screens were masked by running aimlessly around the arena, peppering the 'keeper with shots, now you can take part in a few mini-games (hitting targets, running through gates etc.). These both keep you occupied in the drive to get more and more lovely, delicious points, and provide training for those who might not know exactly what they're doing in the game. The arena is, as you would expect, still available to run around in like a lunatic. Good stuff.



Scoring from a cross? Are you having a laugh? We didn't do this much.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Rocksmith

Well, it's better than Blacksmith



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft San Francisco
Price
£54.99 (game only),
£149.99
(guitar bundle)
Players
1
Genre
Role-playing game
Age Rating
12+
Website
rocksmith.ubi.com/
rocksmith/en-GB/
home/
Twitter
@Rocksmithgame
Facebook
facebook.com/
rocksmith



Back in the not-so-distant past, you would've been forgiven for thinking you were a rock god of the gaming world when you were able to bust out the full 7+ minutes of Dragonforce's *Through The Fire And Flames* on expert *Guitar Hero*. Nowadays the market is unfortunately less fruitful in the guitar-based rhythm genre, and players need something fresh and exciting to have bragging rights over. *Rocksmith* could well be the answer, but with it comes the use of the fabled 'real instrument'. Claiming to teach actual guitar knowledge, Ubisoft has created a teaching aid for all you wannabe rock stars, in the guise of a videogame. Finally, you can honestly say you can play a riff from a well-known song, rather than losing face in a failed attempt at strumming a chord.

Rocksmith teaches you from the ground up, beginning with the basics: how to position your guitar, tune the strings, and hold the pick. You're taught really simple note progressions, working through the career mode until you're finally able to play a song to the end perfectly. It's pretty intuitive to how well you're advancing, becoming more difficult with each playthrough of a song, or slowing down if you stumble. You play much like you would *Guitar Hero*; the strings are marked as colours, while



Rocksmith teaches you from the ground up, beginning with the basics

the fret numbers indicate where to put your fingers and when to strum. It even comes with stickers for your guitar's fret board so you don't get lost, and a unique lead: USB to ¼ inch jack, so you can play using any electric guitar you find lying around.

If you fancy a jam, rather than playing the set list, you also have the option to use your TV as an amp, which includes a range of pedals and effects – perfect to annoy the neighbours with. The set list is always open for those who want to show off what they've learnt, or for those who believe they already possess the musical prowess of Clapton or Hendrix and want to jump right in. Mini-games aim to build on certain techniques while giving you a break from the career mode, and split-screen multiplayer is available for you to rock out with

a friend if you want to go public with your skills.

With a multitude of

classic and more recent rock hits available, *Rocksmith* can definitely teach anyone a thing or two about guitar playing. It's not a chore to learn using the game, and with a host of DLC on the horizon, *Rocksmith* definitely has longevity. Keep practicing and with time you can almost certainly claim to be a rock star.

Jennifer Taylor

VERDICT

Rocksmith brings a fairly fresh approach to learning a real guitar – one that's accessible to anyone hoping to practice while having fun. With a range of modes, memorable rock songs and DLC, it's the logical step forward for guitar-based games.

78%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Most campaign levels are slightly boring, but the Beck stages are brilliant.

Sound Shapes

And The Beat Goes On



Like music? Like platforming? Like *LittleBigPlanet*? Yes? Then get out of our sight and pick up *Sound Shapes*. What's that? No, we're not kidding, it's a Vita game worth picking up. Honest.

Another title that captures the brilliance of the Play, Create, Share ethos, it's one of the few games available for Vita where the massive pre-release hype has been justified. *Sound Shapes* is a great advert for Sony's device. Well, perhaps not at first glance: the latest product helped out the door with Sony Santa Monica's input initially seems like nothing more than a platformer with a nice musical twist.

Which it is, in part. Presented with a series of environmental obstacles (and a few rules that govern the surfaces your avatar, a sticky ball, can adhere to) you'll have to negotiate the stage, picking up 'coins' on the way. Doing so

changes the backing track to the level, as do some of your enemies, so flamboyant play will see your actions adding an extra layer to the track already there.

Which is fun, if a little prescribed. The real game, however, comes after you complete these stages: by finishing the (increasingly complex) levels, you'll unlock musical notes, enemies, backgrounds and other trinkets for use in putting together your own levels. It's here where *Sound Shapes* shines. Or sings. Whatever.

Even if you're not musically inclined, it's difficult not to be impressed by what's on offer. Starting with a blank slate of a level and 120 BPM running through it, soon you'll be dropping in beats, effects and instruments of all kinds, as well as enemies and level geography. The Vita's unique combination of input methods are put



DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros
Developer
Queasy Games
Price
£9.99
Players
1
Genre
Platformer
Age Rating
PEGI 3
Website

us.playstation.com/psvita/games-and-media/psv-sound-shapes.html

Twitter
@soundshapes
Facebook
facebook.com/soundshapessgame

to good use here, and it is – shock – almost as if Queasy actually thought about using the Vita's strengths. We know: crazy.

Like in *LBP*, seeing your creations take shape is the best part of the game; we put together a rudimentary level in about ten minutes, and although it was basic we felt like we'd actually achieved something, which then pushed us to create something bigger and better.

It's this feedback loop that'll keep players interested in *Sound Shapes*, but there are also niggling issues that we hope don't turn into full-scale problems. First, there's the fact that to unlock all of the effects, enemies, backgrounds, etc, you've got to complete the campaign, which is a chore. Second, there's an inherently more difficult bent to *Sound Shapes* than other games under the Play, Create, Share banner thanks to the musical angle: we just hope the community levels are as good as in other games. We're sure they will be, however, and worries aside, this is one of Vita's best games.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

An absolute steal at £9.99, and worth far more than that. *Sound Shapes* has justified the outrageous hype surrounding it. More than just a good game, it's a great showcase for the system. More of this, please.

88%





Love F1? You'll love this. Shortest review ever.



DETAILS

Publisher
Codemasters
Developer
Codemasters
Southam
Price
£44.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
3+
Website
codemasters.com
Twitter
@Formula1Game
Facebook
facebook.com/
formulaonegame

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

F1 2012

Do you really like it?
Do you really like it?



To get the obvious out the way, if you're an F1 fan, you're going to be a *F1 2012* fan. It has the teams, courses and attention to detail that the most demanding of fans will be after. You can turn all the driving aids off so the slightest bit of oversteer in the rain sends you spinning off the track, so only those with superhuman concentration make it through to the end in one piece. It has DRS, KERS, WTF, LMAO and other acronyms. It waves flags and shouts PENALTY at you for the smallest of infractions. The graphics sometimes look a little ropier than you'd like but the overall presentation is slick enough that it compensates. Fans are very well treated and the way the in-car view bobbles and rattles as your speed increases is brilliant. This is packed with nice touches like that.

To keep things authentic, it doesn't push out any truly original ideas

The bigger question is what if you're *not* that good at driving games? What if you aren't that big an F1 fan? *NBA 2K12* is an example of a sports game that you can love without being a huge fan of the subject matter. Does

The way this view bobbles around at speed is genuinely brilliant.



F1 capture that one-for-all spirit? It very, very nearly does.

Codemasters has wisely broken down the demanding slog of an F1 season into different difficulties and different lengths. You can play as a young driver learning the ropes before trying your hand at the real thing, with everything from kinds of tyres

to driving in the wet explained to you. There are also some nice in-game cut-scenes breaking everything up, showing pained reactions at poor races, for example, and challenges that help break up any danger of the racing boring your brain.

The problem with drawing newcomers in isn't anything to do with Codemasters but rather, the sport itself. Even if you're not a fan of basketball or American football or ice

hockey, you'll still nurture lofty aspirations of violent slam-dunks or 80-yard touchdown runs or miracle slapshot goals in your mind. Formula One just doesn't have those air-punching moments in the same way and to keep things authentic, Codemasters doesn't push out any truly original or groundbreaking ideas (which is no doubt why *F1 Race Stars* is in development).

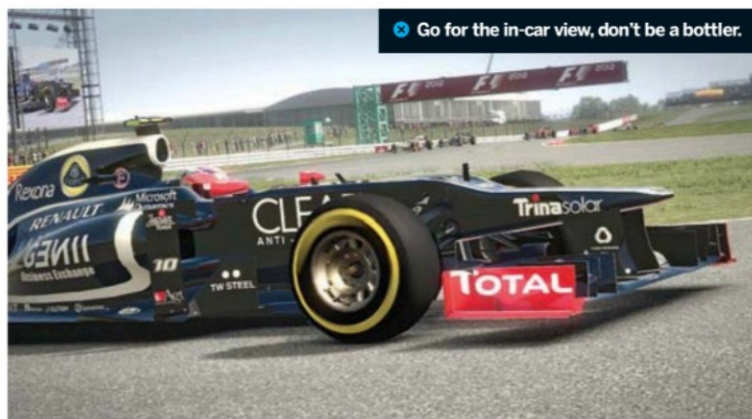
So it comes close but ultimately, this is an F1 game for F1 fans. They'll be the ones most impressed by the package here and the authenticity on show. Those who aren't F1 fans will have a more enjoyable time than previous games allowed thanks to the modes with softer difficulty, but this doesn't go quite far enough for us to give a whole-hearted recommendation. Just a semi-hearted one.

Ryan King

VERDICT

It's an excellent package for fans, and has the authenticity they crave, but it still demands an obsession with F1, as there aren't enough options or choices to truly cater for those who don't love the sport.

79%



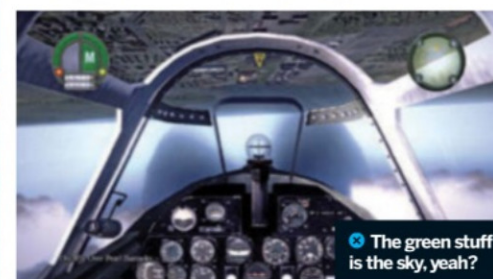
Go for the in-car view, don't be a bottler.



Or you could try



Driver: San Francisco Issue 209
It's not actually that similar but we panicked and it was the first game we thought of. Sorry. 68%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII

Allowing us to write 'waggle your joystick' for the first time in years



DETAILS

Publisher
Mad Catz
Developer
Trickstar Games
Price
£89.99/£49.99
without joystick
Players
1-8
Genre
Flight sim
Age Rating
12+
Website
damageinthegame.
com
Twitter
@DamageInc
Facebook
facebook.com/
damageinthegame

PS3 *Damage Inc* – one of peripheral manufacturer Mad Catz's few game publishing efforts – sums up Germany's entire involvement in the Second World War in one sentence. Nothing to do with the game, it just amused us somewhat.

The main reason we bring that up is because we can't be bothered to talk about *Damage Inc*, because it's really boring. *Really* boring. And ugly. And did we mention it's boring?

Feel like indulging in a 25-minute mission where you are tasked with taking out no less than 80 (eighty) Japanese ("Jap", as the game's characters insist on calling them) aircraft? "The skies are clear, good job – oh wait, there's some more!" over and over again. Line up the reticule with the red dot, hold X until the red target arrow isn't there anymore, move on to the next one. That's about it.

Sometimes you're doing this while under the pretence of defending something, other times you're doing it against a time limit, and other other times you're taking on ground units in some of the most annoying strafing non-action we've ever taken part in. *Damage Inc* is barely functional at best, a massive pile of irritating, boring, ugly dung at worst –

and it frequently veers more towards the latter than the former.

But hey – gimmicks! – the tie in with Mad Catz means you can buy the game with a joystick made specifically for the game. Remember joysticks? They're like the past in your hand.

Damage Inc is functional at best, a massive pile of irritating, boring, ugly dung at worst

In this case, they're like the *very cheap-feeling* past in your hand. It's a totally non-essential element, but to be fair, it does bring with it that more involving sense of control you can only get with the now mostly forgotten peripheral. Just



a shame it feels so tacky and has some idiotic design decisions that feel a lot like the stick came to life three quarters of the way through the game's development (double hammering the throttle forwards to go at 'warspeed'? Sigh).

But the joystick is not the game, it's just a modern day novelty. The game, on the other hand, is a modern day mockery. Aside from genuinely looking like a budget PS2 game at times and seemingly not knowing how to add even the slightest

variety to missions, it's also painfully simplistic – and actually quite racist – in its retelling of the Second World War. All the game is doing is Damaging Mad Catz's reputation. But then, so is the joystick.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It looks bad, it sounds awful, it plays poorly, and it's really expensive with a tacky-feeling joystick. There is no reason to buy this game, play this game or entertain the notion of going near this game. Unless you're a bit insane.

37%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW (JAPAN), MARCH (EUROPE/US)

Max Anarchy

Though you might know it as Anarchy Reigns

PS3

Sega went and said *Anarchy Reigns* would be coming out nine months (nine) later in Europe and the US than it would in its native Japan. Rather than admit defeat, we went out and bought ourselves a copy of the game – despite the initial confusion when we were sent *Max Anarchy*, we soon remembered *that's what it's called*. And on popping it on for the first time, we were met with screen upon screen of information in perfect English – the language *Max Anarchy* defaults to. Someone, somewhere, was trying to tell us they wanted the game released in a timely fashion in the west, and that they were quite happy for you to import it.

But should you? In short: yes. In a bit longer: yes, but only if you're of a certain gamesplaying mindset and are a person of patience. The sort of mindset that has a deep-seated love for all things Platinum Games. The sort of mindset that doesn't expect instant, all-out gratification and is instead happy to work for its rewards. The sort of mindset that is okay with having to work – *hard* – to not get its ass regularly handed to it online.

See, *Max Anarchy* is clearly made for the market of online pugilism, slotting in as a modern incarnation of the likes of *PowerStone* and *Virtual On* as one of those once-forgotten arena-based batter-'em-ups. But you'll want to make a stop off in the six-hour single-player

campaign if only to learn what the hell you're doing in a far more friendly environment.

And while there are fair comparisons to *God Hand* to be thrown at *Max Anarchy*, it's nowhere near as difficult, technical or unforgiving as the Capcom classic. It aims for a more welcoming style of fighting, but one at the same time that feels slower and more shallow as a result – it's not on *Bayonetta*'s level, though with online being as frantic as it is you can see this is an intentional design decision. Even so, this imprecise feel to controls, while forgivable, isn't exactly a great point to have to make, especially when dodging just feels like it only works when it wants to, and you have no idea when it wants to.

There's a story, for some reason: it's silly and, at times, quite funny, but it attempts something serious at times and that's where our brains went into hibernation. It's

Multiplayer is sure to be the sort of experience that instantly puts a lot of people off

unimportant. Basically, you play as Jack Cayman from the massively overlooked *MadWorld* (you didn't play it; it was on Wii) or Leo Victorion, who looks like a male version of the *PN03* lead character (you didn't play it; it was on GameCube). That's all that really matters, alongside the fact you get to play



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Platinum Games
Price
£59.90
Players
1-16
Genre
Third-person brawler
Age Rating
18+
Website
www.sega.com/anarchyreigns
Twitter
@PlatinumGames
Facebook
www.facebook.com/anarchyreigns



as other characters as the game progresses, should you so choose.

It's a handful of levels for each character, split up into six missions – three non-repeatable story missions and three grindable side missions. And grindable, made up as it is, is the key word here. For *Max Anarchy* operates a strange system of unlocks – missions aren't available from the get-go, you have to earn them.

What this leads to is, initially, battering as many lackeys as you can to earn the points to unlock the first mission. From there you play the mission – maybe multiple times – to unlock the story mission. Rinse and repeat. It feels oddly archaic and counter-productive, forcing players to jump through irritating hoops just to earn their progression. But you get used to it. And the medal system of awards

Or you could try



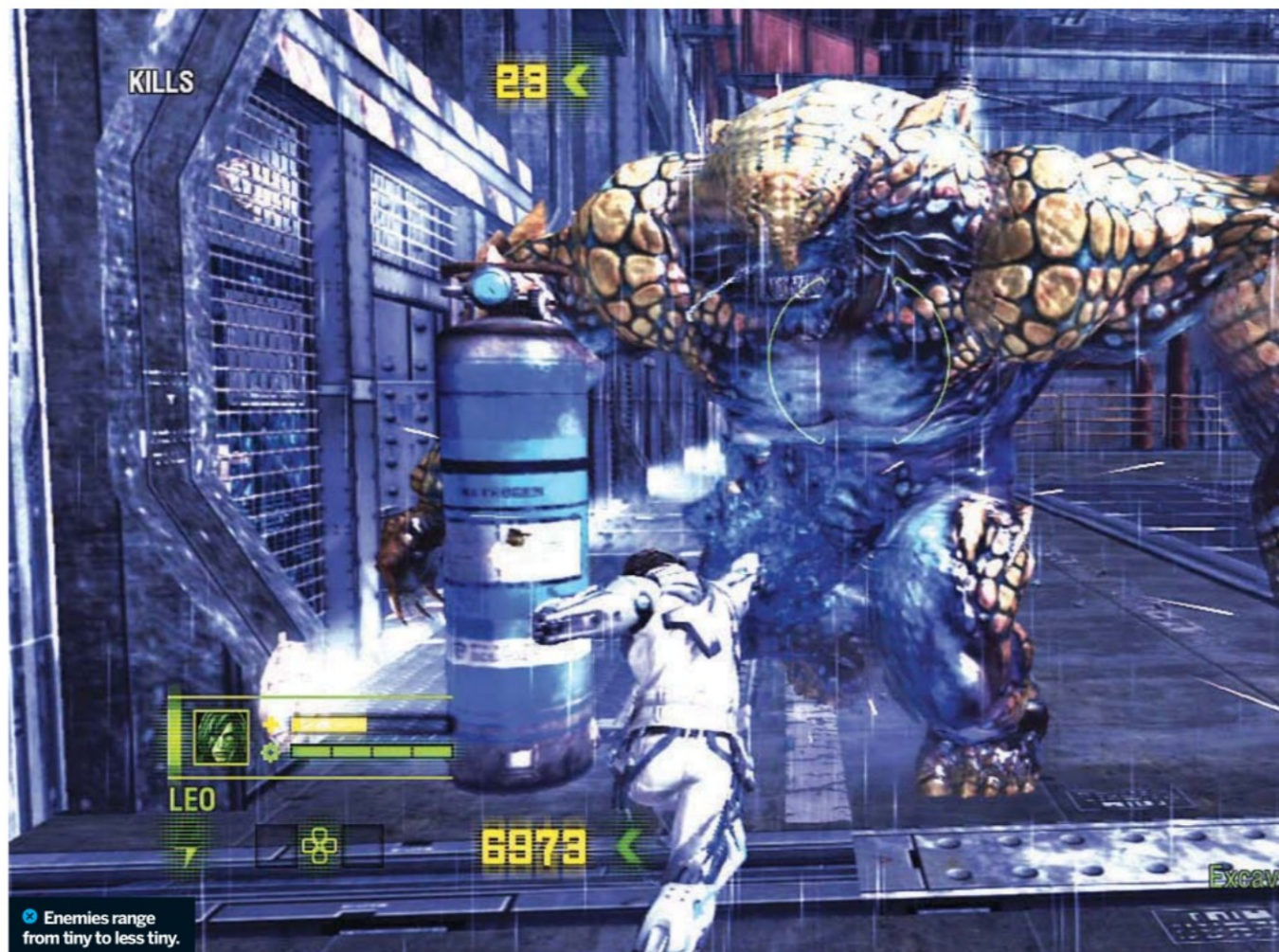
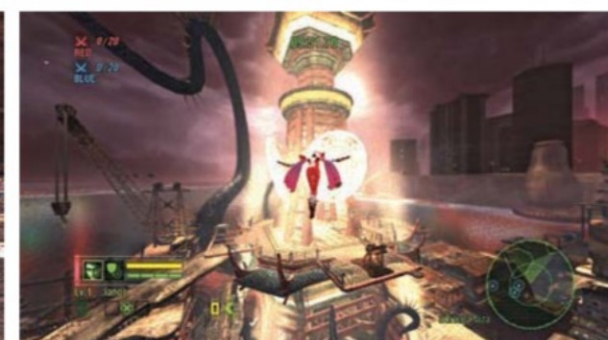
God Hand Issue 216
A harder, more technical game but also one less welcoming to newcomers. **83%**



CLICK TING

What you see is what you get, pretty much

YOU DON'T BEGIN *Max Anarchy* with a full quota of characters, with them unlocked as the single or multiplayer modes are burned through. But you do begin with a full, unchanging moveset – what you start with is what you finish with. In fact, the only unlockable elements outside of the characters are batches of concept art, music, cinematics and character models. Would unlockable moves have been welcome? Initially we thought yes, but considering online it would likely unbalance things to the point that it would be even harder online. And nobody except the most masochistic of types wants that.



will keep you coming back to replay missions – if you're of that mindset. Mmm, delicious platinum medals...

What takes you a hell of a lot longer to get used to, though, is online. It's hard. Initially far too hard, and sure to be the sort of experience that instantly puts a lot of people off. We were level one for around 15 matches before hitting the XP required to get to the second stage. Of 50. And it's not like other players – or the game, which docks points depending on how you're killed – are going to help you find your feet.

This is a baptism of fire the likes of which we have not seen in online gaming. Did we mention it's hard? Because it's hard. Perks help a bit and team-based events make for more controlled anarchy (pun!), but generally speaking it's not a game for those afraid of challenge. Particularly those afraid of what is sometimes unfair

challenge, based on the amount of times we were subjected to throws.

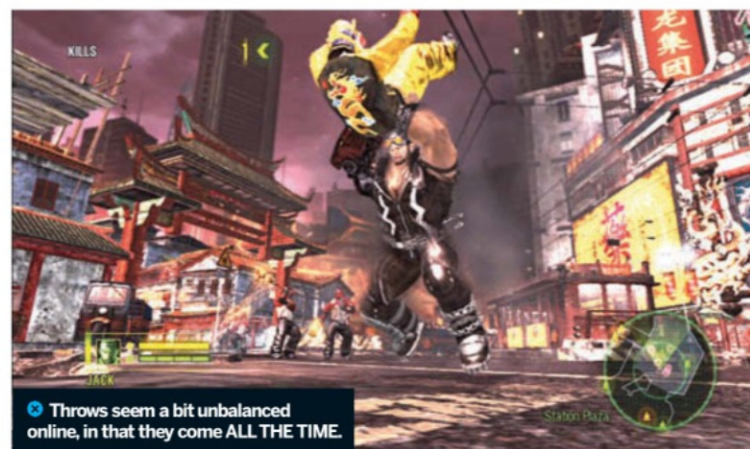
Max Anarchy is good and, for those who have the patience and skill, possibly great. But a possibly great game is *not* a great game – and *Max Anarchy* is not in the same league as *God Hand*, *Bayonetta* or even *PowerStone*. It's fun, it's not fun enough.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Max Anarchy leaves us with mixed feelings. When it clicks, it's excellent. When it doesn't – which is more often – it infuriates. Single-player is fun training, but the real meat of online is going to prove hugely divisive. And with good cause.

70%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

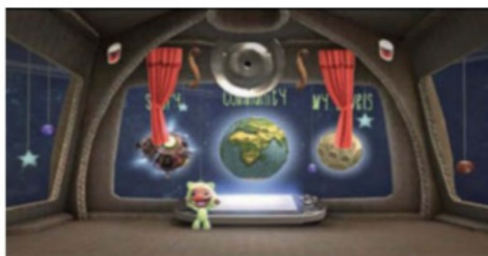
LittleBigPlanet

The whole Planet in your hands



There's a hint of *Limbo* to *LittleBigPlanet PS Vita*. Media Molecule's trademark cutesy platforming is still intact – no worries there – but thanks to new developers Double Eleven and Tarsier Studios, things are just an eensy bit darker. With its pitch-black mineshafts and giant, chomping cogs, the booby-trapped world of *LBP PS Vita* owes more to Playdead Studios than to the lustrous backdrops of previous instalments. And that's not all it has in common with *Limbo*; lateral physics-based puzzles are the order of the day, helped beautifully along by the Vita's front and rear touch pads.

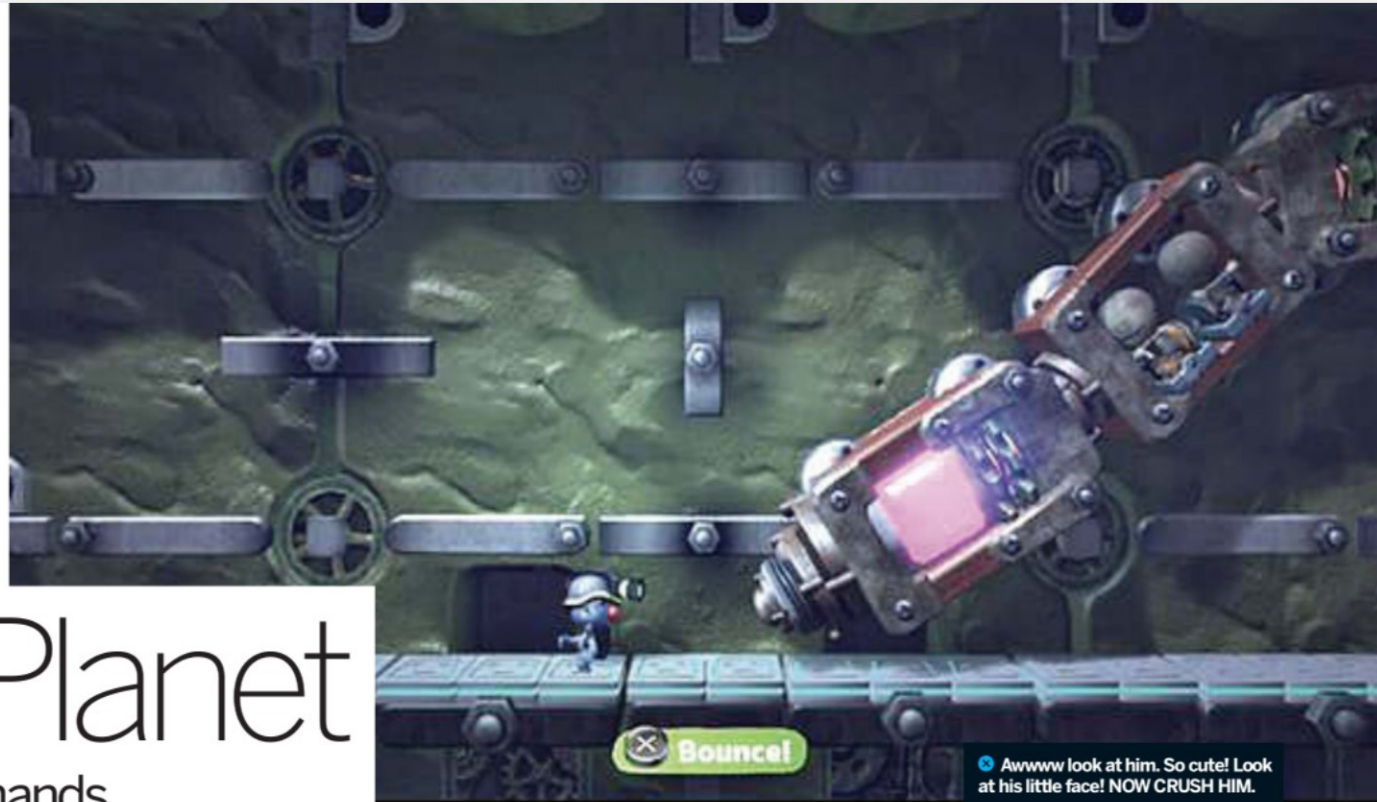
Take the Land of Odd for instance, *LBP PS Vita*'s second (and our favourite) section. It sees the return of the flying and shooting mechanics from *LBP 2*, now mapped to your index and forefinger instead of the analogue sticks. Tap the screen to fire a rocket, and guide it along



using the touch screen; flying works the same way, but now you can push and pull certain objects by tapping the Vita's front and back. It all feels very natural, perfectly complementing the floaty platforming that *LittleBigPlanet* is famous for.

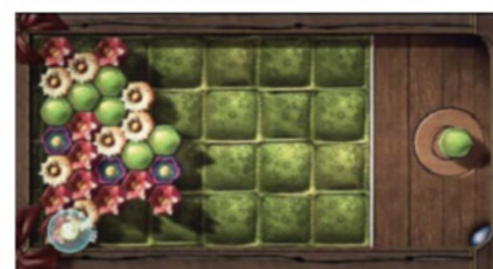
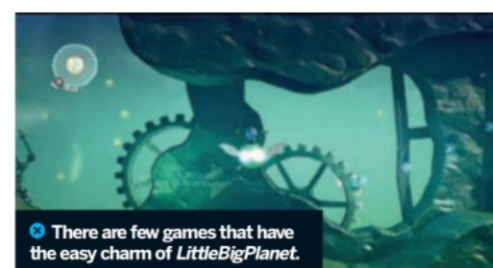
And then there's create mode, which is somehow still getting bigger. Not content with giving us the tools to build, paint and soundtrack our own levels, Double Eleven have extended *LBP*'s patented brand of simple build mechanics to cover the entirety of game design: We were amazed when they let us glue an AI brain on to the cardboard bum-monster we had just made – now *LittleBigPlanet PS Vita* is giving us the space to build full games from scratch.

The new "Memorizer" function means you can add save points to your custom levels, giving other players the freedom to drop in and out whenever they like – you know, just like a real game. Add that to the returning cut-scene director mode from *LBP 2*, and an online community of almost 500,000, and you've got your own personal development studio. So long as your imagination can keep up with *LittleBigPlanet PS Vita*'s seemingly endless creative tools, you'll never be short of games again!



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Double Eleven/
Tarsier Studios/SCE
Worldwide Studios
Price
£34.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Platform
Age Rating
7+
Website
www.littlebigplanet.com/en/vita/
Twitter
@LittleBigPlanet
Facebook
[facebook.com/littlebigplanet](https://www.facebook.com/littlebigplanet)



The Vita feels very much the natural home for *LittleBigPlanet*. Any qualms about the sometimes simplistic, occasionally boring story mode are settled by innovative touch controls that turn every single level into a fun physics puzzle. There are still too many tutorials (more than sixty) but it's small price to pay for *LBP*'s ever-expanding toolbox. Quirky, portable and endlessly fun, *LittleBigPlanet* is what your Vita has been waiting for. Get it.

Ed Smith

VERDICT

Veterans will find the tutorials an ordeal, and it would still be better if everything were available from the off, but the eclectic level design makes the chore of unlocking a lot more colourful. If the community is up to the task, *LBP PS Vita*'s create mode has massive amounts of potential.

93%



The create mode is even better, as the touch screen makes everything easier.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Madden NFL 13

Tossing the pigskin around. Not like that, you weirdo



DETAILS

Publisher
EA Sports
Developer
EA Tiburon
Price
£39.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
PEGI 3
Website
easports.com/
madden-nfl
Twitter
@EAMaddenNFL
Facebook
facebook.com/
EASportsMaddenNFL

PS3 If you're not familiar with the terms 'end zone,' 'pitch ball' and 'pump fake' then put this back on the shelf, pick up FIFA and be at one with your knowledge of European sport. Why? Because this is not the game for those adverse to a learning curve. The mission control room's main console at NASA is easier to master than the perfect playbook in *Madden NFL 13*. This isn't to say that it's a bad game, no sir. *Madden* is like a beautifully crafted, double bacon, multi-layered cheese burger that's stacked so high that you have no idea how to tackle it. But once you do, boy howdy, the rewards are satisfying.

Madden, like most of EA's sports games, takes itself seriously. It's less of a game and more of a sports simulator/real-time strategy mixed with some grandiose cinematography. It's an emotive formula that we love, and it works so well. There's a Hollywood feeling that carries throughout the game, from the training ground to the excellent 'connected careers' online.

The introduction of the new Infinity Engine adds a bite of reality to collisions, which, to be honest, are probably the only reasons a non-fanatic will play this game. You can satisfy your blood lust with missile-shaped leaps into

an opponent or, in possession, gallop like a gazelle, palming off predators with your free hand while pirouetting into the end zone and subsequently performing a macho/camp dance of your choice, which is the second reason you'll probably play this game. The passing mechanic has been overhauled too. Instant or 'ping pong' passing after the snap is no more, receivers' (still makes me laugh) icons only light up when the pass is on, so learn to keep hold of the pig skin. If you're not interested in pulling off the perfect play, keeping score or even scoring then that's how you turn this into a pick-up-and-play game.

If, however, you've ever dreamed of frantically drawing squiggly lines on a white board and giving a rousing speech to an all but beaten team, then the world is your deep-fried oyster. As with previous versions, you can select and tinker with your formation before and during the game, allowing you to execute the perfect play. Magnified in the 'connected career' mode, this lets you create your own player and develop them over a number of seasons or take control of an established player or coach. Online or offline, you can create or join a league and play out the entire football season. If you do create your own player, however, be prepared for not much excitement, at least to start with.

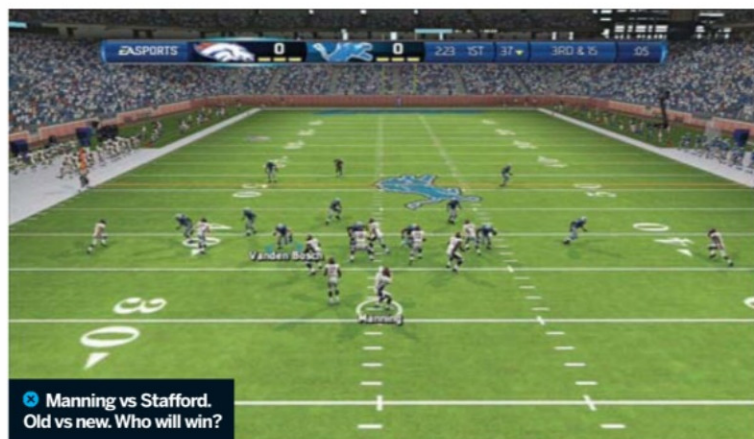
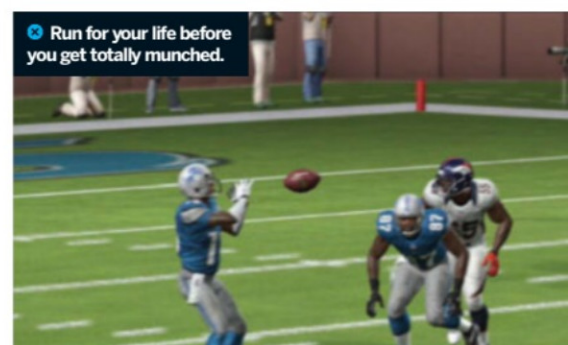
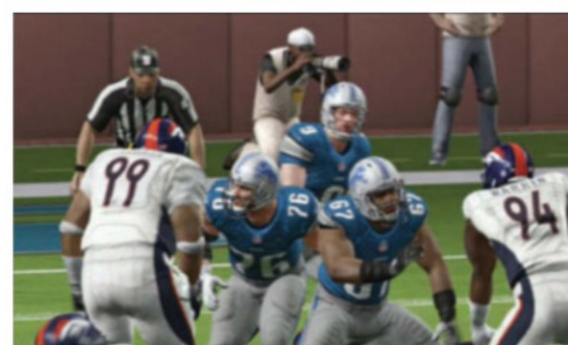
It's not the game to buy for an introduction into the sport, but it is the first step in a path towards a dedicated gamer's only simulation.

Jay McGregor

VERDICT

It's an important step forward for the series and continues refining the formula, as realistic collisions are added to the mix. An essential purchase for owners of last year's *Madden*? Probably not but if you haven't tried this series yet, you're missing out.

86%



RELEASE DATE: 28 SEPTEMBER

Dead Or Alive 5

'Tekken' you for a ride! Wait, wrong series...



DETAILS

Publisher
Tecmo Koei

Developer
Team Ninja

Price

£49.99

Players

1-2

Genre

Fighting

Age Rating

16+

Website

www.teamninja-

studio.com/doa5/

Twitter

@TeamNINJASudio

Facebook

facebook.com/

deadoralivegame



Big, heaving, sweaty chests. That's what you want to read about isn't it?

You bunch of pervs. But hey – *Dead Or Alive 5*, for all its proclamations of treating female characters with more dignity or respect, is still a boob-frenzy. Less lascivious than previous entries to the series, no doubt, but no less happy to turn its women (and girls, natch) into little more than eye-fodder. But hey, there's some sweaty men too, so... there's... balance? Maybe not. Anyway, read into that what you will. We'll talk about the game now we've got the obligatory bit out of the way.

Dead Or Alive 5 is a good fighting game. A very good fighting game. Review over. Oh, alright, we'll go on. We haven't had an entry to the series on PlayStation since *DOA2* all the way back in 2000, when we giggled at the breast physics on our PS2s. Well, you could count *DOA Paradise* on PSP in 2010, but that was awful, so we won't.

So what's changed in the 12 years since we last had the chance to smack someone up in a danger zone? A few things, and not all for the better, it has to be said.

One undoubtedly brilliant element is the look of the whole thing: *Dead Or Alive 5* looks absolutely fantastic at times, with

background detail almost as in-depth as the main character models themselves. 'Looks don't matter, blah blah' we may say, but when they're this good they do add something – depth, atmosphere – to the game and we welcome it with open arms.

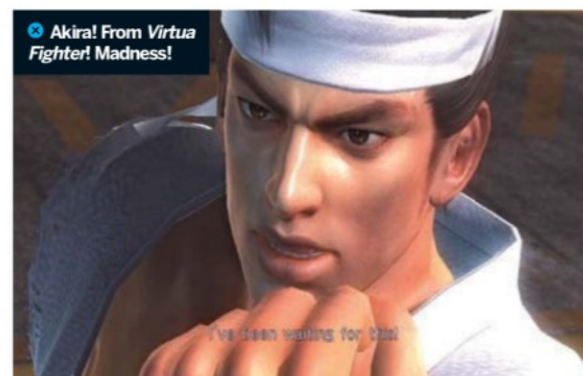
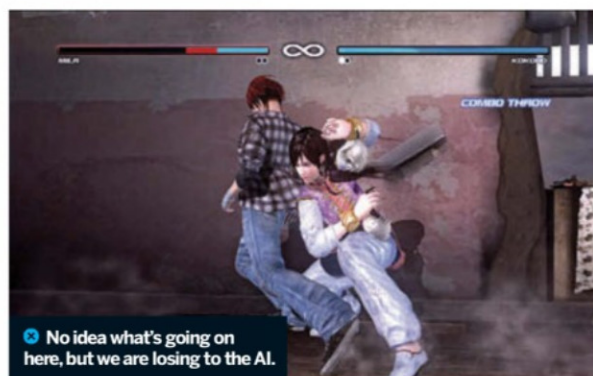
The fighting system itself has seen updates too, though this is where it becomes a mixed bag. It's the four-button set up of before: punch, kick, hold (reversal), throw and it's simple for anyone to pick up and play, just as it's always been. But there are additions that have come along with the series as it has seen sequels pop up on the Microsoft consoles: air throws, offensive holds, critical stuns and suchlike.

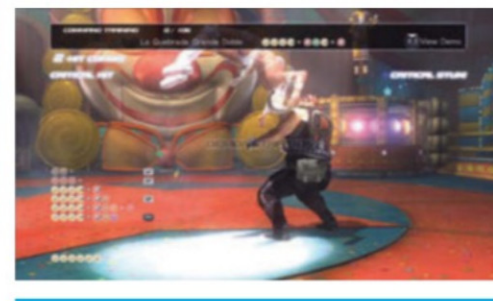
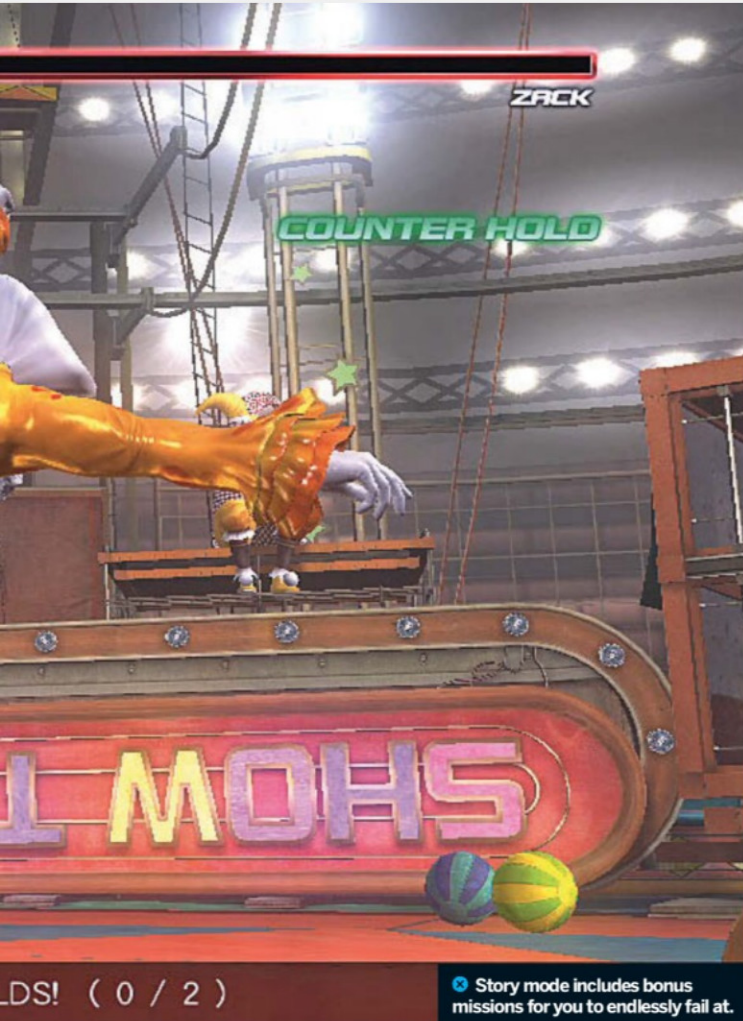
Generally speaking, they're logical and do a job – it makes sense for Bass to be whacking out air throws left and right, and Bayman's ability to aggressively counter an attacking enemy is a very welcome addition to the lumbering oaf's moveset. But elements like critical stun in particular upset the flow and often feel unfair, at least when fighting against the AI. It's an element that upsets the balance of a fight, leaving you unable to defend unless you employ superhuman reaction speeds and reverse out of it. 90 per cent of the time you won't do that.

Dead Or Alive 5 is quick, unrelenting and not exactly heavy on consideration

We have to give credit to Team Ninja for attempting to flesh out the single-player experience with a story mode that lasts a few hours. It's not often you see this sort of effort to give value to individual players, aside from something like the excellent single-player mode in *Mortal Kombat*. It's a shame, then, that it's thoroughly un-excellent – a convoluted mess of serious story (why?) and somewhat lost in translation humour that just ends up being an annoying tunnel to have to wade through in order to grab character and costume unlocks, rather than the interesting and worthwhile addition that it really should have been. Credit for the effort, none for the execution.

Of course, as with your standard brawlers, this is a game for more than one person to play. Throw in a competitor and you've got a much more enjoyable experience – a slightly more organic style of play than against the AI opens up, reversals and (previously irritating) critical stuns become plausible techniques, rather than random occurrences.

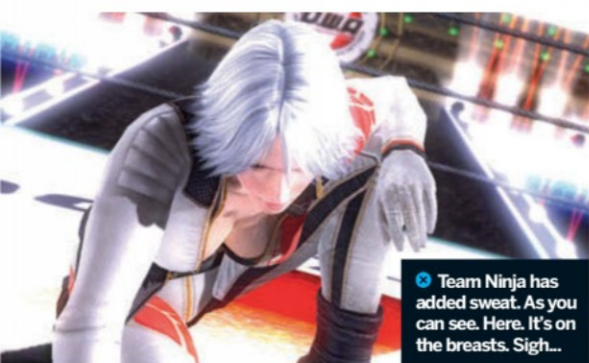
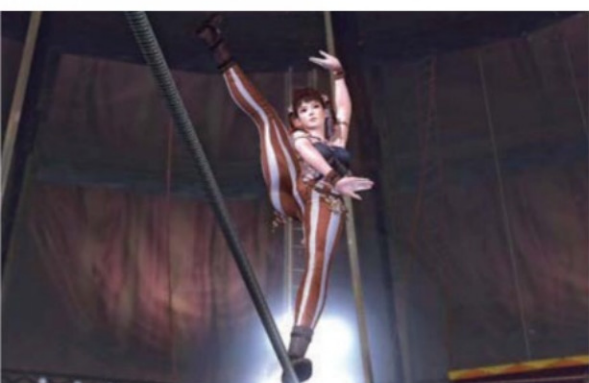




MISCELLANEA

Because there are other things, too

DOA5 BACKS UP its meaty (unimpressive) single-player mode with the usual fare: arcade, versus, time attack, tag modes, training, unlockables. It's very much by the numbers and no less than you would expect, though some of the unlockable titles require some rather extreme play time to unlock. Play as a character online 3,000 times, for example. That's a lot of times to hit punch as Christie. Still, it's something that certain players will enjoy and it's good to see at least something thrown in to encourage extended play, even if you probably do only play it for ages to unlock Lei Fang's most revealing outfit.



It's not a tactical fighter; you're not going to be feeling each other out for 20 seconds each round before launching a calculated attack. *Dead Or Alive 5* is quick, unrelenting and not exactly heavy on consideration on the part of its players. It's bombast and excitement in a stage, with walls smashing down and trains derailed as a result of your fight – it's spectacle made to make things more exciting and, dare we say it, draw attention away from a combat system that isn't exactly brilliant.

It's all there: throws, the ever-important reversals, juggles, combos, whatever else. But it feels off. It feels mechanical and almost pre-ordained in places, with clear hits swiping through an opponent because – according to the game's logic – you're not *allowed* to be hitting them at this point. You can't fault

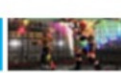
a game for having its internal rules, but you can fault it for making very little sense in that regard: you're making contact, it should be a hit. Also, you can just choose Christie and hammer punch until you inevitably win.

Dead Or Alive 5 is good. Very good. But the competition is that bit better. It's a viable option for fighting fans, it's just not the best. **Ian Dransfield**

VERDICT

A solid, enjoyable fighting game held back by an overly mechanical feel to fights and an air of simplicity that's just too hard to ignore. At its best, it is a lot of fun, though, and it does look absolutely fantastic.

78%





❖ The battle to hail the last cab was getting serious.



❖ Come on Di Maria, where's the nutmeg?



that licensing is going to be an issue if you want to play in England or with English teams (although how could you resist the appeal of 'Man Blue' vs 'Swearcle'?). Animation too is sometimes stiff and clipped, but for our money that is infinitely preferable to FIFA's over-abundance of animations (and players with turning circles like cows).

And, no doubt to the delight of pretty much no-one, the game scripting still becomes too obvious at points. Liverpool aside, hitting the post four to five times in a half doesn't usually happen, and it doesn't happen nearly every game.

Look past those flaws – if you can – and PES 2013 is the best entry on PS3 by an absolute mile, and up there with the best

the series has to offer. Gamers are in the envious position of having two superb football games this year, but for us PES edges it, thanks to better passing and more varied ways of scoring. Well done, Konami: just don't spend another six years getting it right for the next gen, eh?

Steve Burns

VERDICT

The PES game we've been waiting for since 2007, 2013 takes the established PES principles and adds best in class passing to create an addictive football sim. FIFA may have been in the lead, but PES 2013 puts Konami back on top.

88%

In this series



PES 2012 Issue 210
Good, but floaty shooting and other niggles drag it down. **74%**

Pro Evolution Soccer 2013

LIQUID FOOTBALL

Beating the best team in the world, the PES way



Here's Messi, bossing it...



Until he's tackled by madman Pepe...



Who lays the ball off to Ozil...



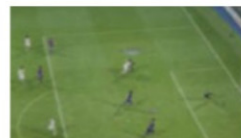
Who does the same to Marcelo...



Who takes it forward...



Before releasing it to Ronaldo...



Who does what he does best.



SEE YA.



❖ Forlan: Man Utd's best-ever worst player.



❖ Here's the Incredible Sulk in action.

XBOX 360

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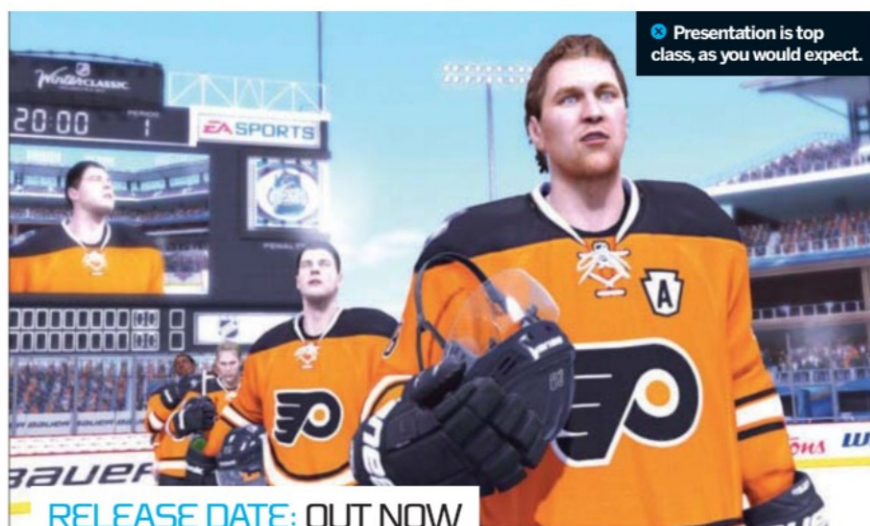


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Presentation is top class, as you would expect.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

NHL 13

Featuring the most monumental changes to an ice hockey game since NHL 12



Publisher EA Sports Developer In-house Price £49.99 Players 1-8 Genre Sports Age Rating 1-8 Website www.ea.com/nhl Twitter @EASPORTSNHL Facebook www.facebook.com/easportsnhl

NHL 13, you say? We say: a list of new features that add bits,

but not huge amounts, and make us wonder if we can be bothered next year.

True Performance Skating? It's more animations, better-looking movement and physics-based skating. It means things look better and players are more capable of 'explosive' pace. In practice? Very little changes. It feels the same. But how else could they do it?

NHL Moments Live – scenario mode. This is good, because scenario modes always tend to be good. We genuinely completed the 'score two as Gretzky' challenge with 0.3 seconds left on the clock. That's a buzz you don't get in the normal game – though it's also a buzz you get in every single

other scenario mode, because it's exactly the same as them.

GM Connected is a solid addition, but it is just putting Be A GM mode online – not as monumental a change as the marketing gumph might have you believe. Hockey IQ means players play better off the puck, which is something we hardly noticed (though that's not to say it isn't there) and the other changes are so minute there seems little point in raising them.

It's not that we're being negative, it's just hard to get any enthusiasm up for another iterative entry to a series. Say hello to FIFA 13 while you're here, anyway. **Ian Dransfield**

VERDICT

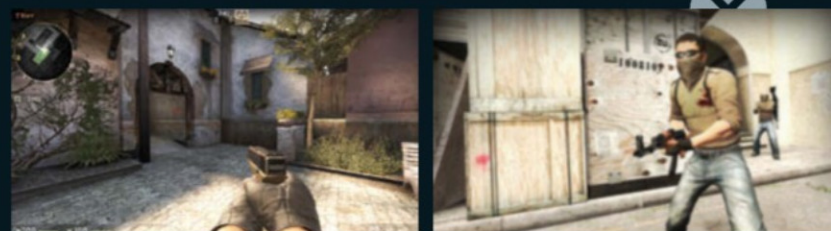
Despite the addition of True Performance Skating™, this does just feel like a slight adjustment over NHL 12, which felt like a minor tinkering of NHL 11, which... well, you get the point. It's good fun, but it's very recognisable fun.

74%



Puck-thwacking: has it ever not been fun in gaming form?

PSN reviews



COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

The king is back. All hail the king!

Publisher Valve Developer In-house Price £11.99 (US Store) Players 1-10 Genre FPS



"DOES IT WORK on pad?" we cried. "Yes!" shouted Ian, between annoyed mouthfuls of cheese sandwich. Not only did we ruin his lunch as reward for him playing it first but we then refused to believe him. But good lord, it *does* work on pad. *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* would need mouse and keyboard to work. Not so. With its chunky characters, fluid movement and lack of fine-aiming (apart from sniper rifles), it's a game that keeps the fast, frantic encounters of *Counter-Strike* while softening the need for precision. Stunning value for money given it's a download title and one of the best FPS games on PS3.

89%



TONY HAWK PRO SKATER HD

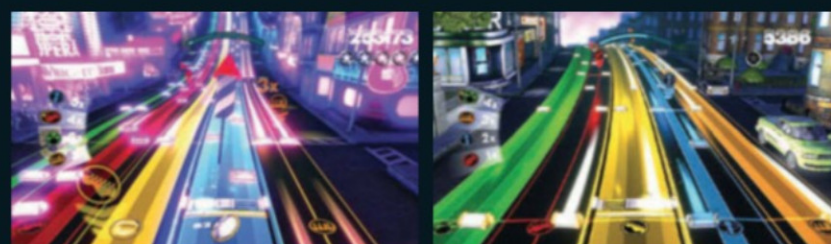
Older, wiser, not as welcome as it was

Publisher Activision Developer Neversoft Price £9.99 Players 1-4 Genre Sport



IT'S EITHER JUST like the old games or it's not, depending on which deranged forumite you're in the company of, so let's put the argument to bed. When you max out your stats, it does start to feel like the older titles again, as you throw tricks together in a sequence that gets longer and riskier until you end up crunching your face into the tarmac. It's a joyous trip down memory lane for the most part but the closer you look, the more grey hairs you see. Downhill Jam is the single worst level created in anything ever, some of the controls flipping to and from ramps are a nightmare and it doesn't really zing with the freshness other HD updates do. Real shame.

73%



ROCK BAND BLITZ

Don't feel, think

Publisher Harmonix Developer Harmonix America Price £8.49 Players 1 Genre Music



DO YOU REMEMBER *Amplitude* or *Frequency*? If so, job done! Because *Rock Band Blitz* is just like those titles with a few tweaks. Rather than playing a few notes to temporarily clear that particular channel of sound, you now build up combo multipliers. Rather than having to show finger dexterity to hit the right notes, the key skill to nailing high scores is planning ahead and thinking strategically. Better yet, any *Rock Band* tracks you've bought previously carry over, and given there are 2,498 DLC songs... well, it's not like you'll have bought them all, but you get the idea. *Rock Band Blitz* is rhythm-action for those with sausage fingers but with a sharp mind. As opposed to sharp fingers and a sausage mind, we suppose.

80%



RELEASE DATE: 25 MAY

Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron

Robots are a-changin'



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
High Moon Studios
Southam
Price
£39.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Third-person shooter
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.transformers-game.com
Twitter
@HighMoonStudios
Facebook
www.facebook.com/transformersgame

PS3

Transformers haven't seemed too concerned with being in disguise ever since Michael Bay made noisy nonsense out of a series of kids' toys and slapped it in cinemas several years ago. High Moon Studio has sheepishly embraced this histrionic-laden methodology, once again placing spectacle at the forefront of another hefty third-person shooter based on Hasbro's metal-morphing extraterrestrials.

Luckily *Fall Of Cybertron* is more than just a jaunty Eighties nostalgia trip. This is the franchise appealing at its most broad, filling the screen with a city-sized Autobot, Metroplex, laying waste to a Decepticon base one moment, and relishing the sight of Grimlock's T-Rex state flame-roasting enemies the next.

It's easy to ignore the glaring faults when the game is rocketing from controlling one bolt-bashing robot to the next

Unlike in its predecessor, players aren't given a choice of robot before the start of each chapter, with High Moon Studios choosing to redirect attention by structuring individual chapters around specific Transformers, which in turn focuses the story and strengthens the overall pace of the game.

To its detriment, this fresh perspective comes at the cost of the co-op aspect that was present

❖ Vehicles still handle much like they did in the predecessor: rubbish.



in the original. It's a perplexing omission, given that over half of the campaign involves more than one Transformer interacting and

completing objectives with another.

Still, there's a nice balance of fan service and gameplay reverence throughout the character roster, and one chapter towards the end of the story switches between multiple Autobot and Decepticon characters in a head-spinning sequence that is without a doubt the game's most rousing moment.

That can probably be attributed to the fact that it's easy to ignore the glaring faults when the game is rocketing from controlling one bolt-bashing robot to the next. While the scale, visuals and ambition have clearly improved since

War For Cybertron, some of the fundamental mechanics are still creaking under the bonnet. All car-like vehicles handle with zero traction, diminishing any sense of speed, and the lack of cover system in what is ostensibly a cover-based shooter is irksome to say the least – especially when enemies seem to duck behind cover easily.

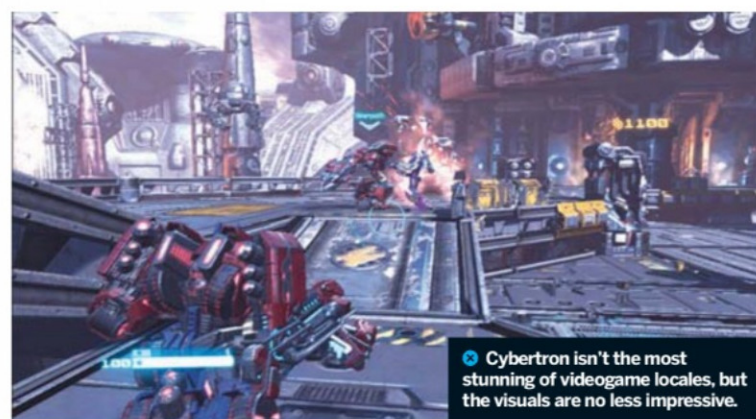
These niggles notwithstanding, there are some sweeping improvements that do much to alleviate this entry above mediocrity, including much larger environments to explore that help mask the predictable linearity that underpins the whole campaign. Ultimately, *Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron* is a definitive improvement on its predecessor, but only just. It's hardly a waste of Energon, but High Moon Studios has yet to assemble a *Transformers* game that fires on all cylinders.

David Scarborough

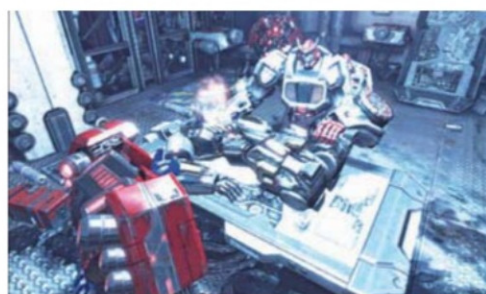
VERDICT

High Moon Studios has delivered a game marginally better than its forbearer, but still struggles to balance the twin forms of the Transformers themselves. If the vehicles were up to snuff then this would be a game worth celebrating.

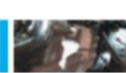
73%



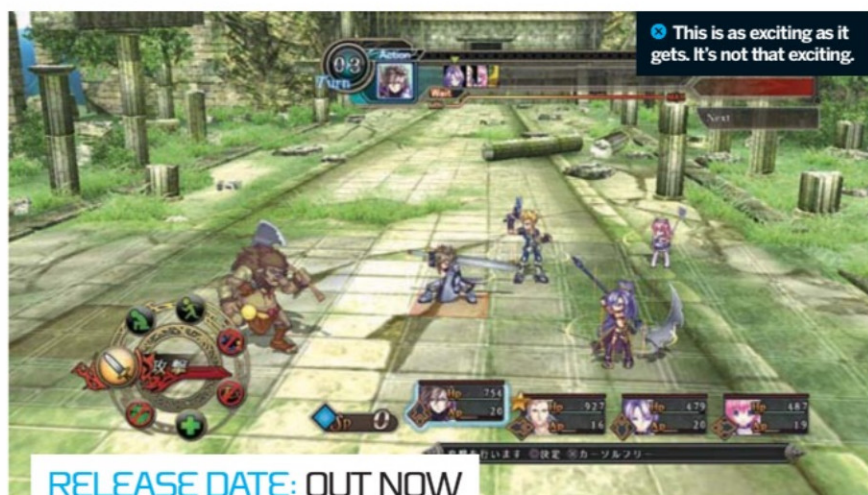
❖ Cybertron isn't the most stunning of videogame locales, but the visuals are no less impressive.



In this series



Transformers: War For Cybertron Issue 206
Robots punching each other – what more do you want? 80%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Agarest: Generations Of War 2

I'm just going to lay down for a whi-zzzzzzz



PS3 Publisher Ghostlight UK Developer Idea Factory Price £39.99
Players 1 Genre RPG Age Rating 16+ Website ghostlight.uk.com
Twitter @ghostlightgames Facebook facebook.com/GhostlightGames

SEX! DINOSAURS! THINGS ON FIRE! We were taught at day

one of Writing School to catch people's attention straight away because then you entice them to read further. See? Now we're doing the boring bit, you're still reading because of the vague promise of sex with dinosaurs. Making a memorable first impression matters.

And so, *Agarest: Generations Of War 2*, which features the most boring, confused opening of any game we can remem... no. We can't even remember the intro any more. It's the combination of different problems attacking you at the same time. It's not a nice game to look at, none of the characters are engaging and *Generations Of War 2* trips over itself trying to explain the 50,000 game mechanics necessary to progress. The end result is a snooze-fest and you just want to hurry up and get to the bit where you're doing something

fun like, say, sticking a firesword up a dragon's bum. It never hits those levels of excitement but it does eventually, reluctantly warm your interest. A bit.

Combat is initially the worst of both worlds – a button-bashing frenzy tied to a levelling-up system that makes you go “what?” and “que?” – but time spent with *Generations Of War 2* allows you to unravel that mess and it even threatens to become fun. But it's a lot of effort to reach that point and it's just an empty threat without nearly enough sex, dinosaurs or things on fire.

Ryan King

VERDICT

It (eventually) recovers from an awful start but only the truly dedicated will have the patience and will to see it through that far. What interesting ideas are here end up lost beneath a tidal wave of bad ones.

43%



PSN reviews



TOKYO JUNGLE

Rejoice, he said, for it was good

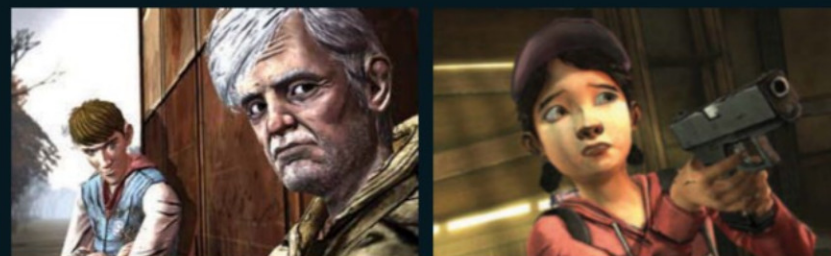
Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer PlayStation C.A.M.P./Crispy's/Japan Studio Price £9.99 Players 1-2 Genre Action-adventure



OOPS. SEE, WE were willing to laugh along with *Tokyo Jungle*, but not *actually* acknowledge it as a good game. That would be silly. Impossible, even. Except *Tokyo Jungle* is really good fun.

It's a roguelike game of survival (away from the unlockable story missions) where you play through the life of generations of a particular animal: hunting, grazing, mating, surviving. If you die, it's back to the beginning, and RPG-style increases in abilities means you get better as you go along. It's rough around the edges and mad as a box of spaniels with hammers glued to them, but you know what? It's actually good.

81%



THE WALKING DEAD: EPISODE 3

Flippin' heck, it's all a bit grim

Publisher Telltale Games Developer Telltale Games Price £4.99 Players 1 Genre Strategy



IT'S HARD TO discuss *The Walking Dead* without spoiling it, but for those who have played the first two, this is when simmering tensions finally erupt. In terms of talking points and emotional drama, this is the best episode thus far and perhaps the best game of its ilk on PS3.

The decisions here are far tougher than anything in *Mass Effect*. Yet it's also the only episode that has noticeable flaws. There are some buggy, glitchy areas and also some action sequences, which simply highlight Telltale's inability to find the right controls to match the drama. It's not a fatal flaw but it is the first sign of weakness in the otherwise excellent series.

86%



MASS EFFECT 3 - LEVIATHAN DLC

It's yet more Mass Effect! Yay?

Publisher EA Developer BioWare Price £9.99 Players 1 Genre RPG



IT'S WEIRD TO say this but *Leviathan* is the most standard, straight-up, by-the-numbers, competent DLC you'll ever play. Okay, it wasn't that weird, but we mean in terms of games. Because you'd expect more from BioWare and more from *Mass Effect* and instead, *Leviathan* is a safe, solid, extra few hours of the space epic. That's okay. Sort of. That it takes place before the actual ending of *Mass Effect 3* robs the storyline of some suspense but the gorgeous new locales make up for that. It's just... well, it's more *Mass Effect*. No more, no less. A good buy for those who still have their copy but certainly not worth snapping up the game again for.

71%

TOP TEN PSN RETRO



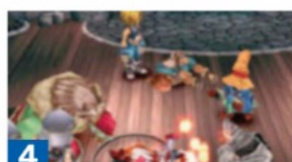
1 Metal Gear Solid



2 Resident Evil 2



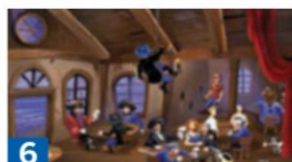
3 God Hand



4 Final Fantasy IX



5 Streets Of Rage 2



6 The Secret Of Monkey Island



7 Driver



8 Final Fight: Double Impact



9 Sonic The Hedgehog 2



10 Crash Bandicoot

RETRO ON PSN... They're old but are they any good?



Bushido Blade



• Release date September 1997/November 2008 (JP PSN) • Publisher Square • Developer Light Weight
• Games it influenced *Bushido Blade 2*, *Kengo: Master Of Bushido*

AS GENRES GO, fighting games aren't known for their realism.

The most famous of them all, *Street Fighter II*, sees guys in pyjamas throwing fire out of their hands and air force colonels engaging in fist fights on government land, in clear contravention of all known health and safety rules. *Tekken* has players fighting giant pandas and robot Dolph Lundgrens. And *Dead Or Alive*'s, ahem, 'physics' couldn't be more outlandish if they tried.

Bushido Blade is different. So different, in fact, that when it turned up in 1997 it appeared to have been created by aliens who had never even heard of an arcade.

Instead of taking place in a magical land where getting smashed around the head with a weapon of war is greeted with nothing more severe than a flash and a lost tech roll opportunity, here was a weapons-based fighting game where taking a sword to the face is actually akin to *taking a sword to the face*.

It's one of the most tactical fighters in history: stances (high, medium and low), weapon types and even the stage itself factor into everything players do. We say 'stage' because in *Bushido Blade* it's possible to fight from essentially the side of the island the story takes place on to the other in one bout. Unlikely, but if you feel the need to turn the environmental tables, you can.



And you'll need every advantage you can get, because one good strike is enough to kill your opponent, and even a hit to the limbs is debilitating: hit your opponent's arm and they'll lose the ability to use it; chop a leg and they'll fall to one knee. For the true sadists out there you can even slice both legs and one arm and watch your opponent crawling for safety, waving their one good arm around like an epileptic linesman. Glorious.

Not that the game itself encourages that sort of barbarism: as the title handily suggests, *Bushido Blade* wants you to fight with honour. Throwing sand or striking from behind or to the side of your opponent will see you punished, as the game only allows those that have played by the rules to see the true end of the story. It's a slick system that ups the ante on what is already a high-stakes game.

So it's different, but one fighting game constant applies: like most other games in the genre it's better with two players. Fighting the CPU is fun – and true masters could pit themselves against a 100 opponents in a row – but getting the better of a human is far, far more gratifying. (*Bushido Blade* even enabled players to use the PlayStation Link Cable (requiring only one disc, no less) so they had a whole screen to themselves.)

A sequel followed, as did a spiritual successor on PS2. It's not enough: get this remade, Square, and maybe we'll forgive you for taking 900 years to finish *FF Vs XIII*.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 20 • 94%
"Stylish and brutal sword fighting."

NEVER COMING TO PSN #10

Die Hard Trilogy



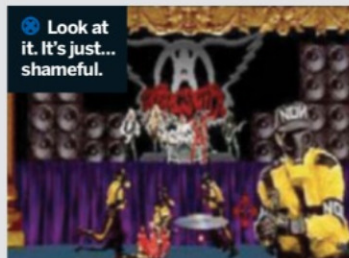
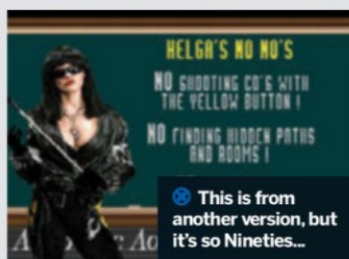
- Release November 1996
- Developer Probe Interactive

REMEMBER WHEN THIS came out? When *Die Hard* was just a trilogy and should probably have stayed that way? Before it went totally mental and had John McClane killing helicopters with cars, the series was about a man who was exceptionally talented at killing people. He wore a vest, got into scrapes, and was generally like you and me. They were good times, and *Die Hard* trilogy captured them very well.

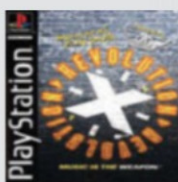
Comprised of three different gameplay genres (each representing a film), the game was incredibly good value. The *Die Hard* portion was a third-person shooter, *Die Hard 2* a lightgun game, and *With A Vengeance* an open world driving game. Each captured the spirit of the film, and we're still surprised to this day that it even got made: most developers can't get one game right, let alone three. It also helped that it was incredibly violent, with a mean sense of humour and a nice line in taking the you-know-what out of its own players. It's unspeakably ugly now, looking like it's been set on fire and put out with a spade, but we love it anyway.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT



Revolution X



AS WE MENTIONED last month, the Nineties were terrible, like a bad hangover that lasts a decade,

and your neighbour won't stop playing *Wonderwall*. Fashion, films, music: most of it was rubbish. Games were no different: just look at *Revolution X*.

Not heard of it? Good for you. Those that have will instantly get a thousand yard stare at the mention of the name: after all, there are some things you

don't come back from, and playing a lightgun game based on Aerosmith is one of them.

Yes, in *Rev X*'s fictitious world all forms of youth culture have been banned, and Aerosmith themselves kidnapped. It's up to players to go around the world shooting the forces of darkness with... CDs. Looping samples of the band's back catalogue loop as you do so.

And if that wasn't bad enough, when it came to PlayStation it didn't even have lightgun support.

PS2 CLASSICS REVIEW - SHELLSHOCK: NAM 67



Black Ops From The Guys Behind Killzone



WHENEVER YOU HEAR a videogame described as 'adult', you can be sure that it's anything but. Same goes for 'mature': it generally means tits, swearing and blood, with very little else thrown in.

ShellShock, in the run up to release, was being touted as something very different. Set in America's most controversial war and telling the story of the stresses put upon those out in the field, *Killzone* developer Guerilla was aiming to essentially make *Platoon: The Game* (and we don't mean those dodgy 8-bit conversions that bore as much resemblance to the film's themes as they did *Citizen Kane*).

The release date came and went, and the game suffered high profile delays. When it finally arrived it was, sadly, nowhere near what had been promised: it was still a shooter at the end of the day, and wasn't even particularly good to boot. A shame, because it had potential, but we'll say this: it's certainly better than the sequel, which scored 32%.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Command & Conquer

COVERTOPS. For those that don't remember that, it was the code that gave you the – yes – covert ops missions. We remember it because we played this so much back in the day we nearly died. Now, we wouldn't play it if you paid us. Sorry.



The Need For Speed

We used to love this, if only because you could attach an invisible machine gun to your car via a cheat code. Barely playable now of course, but still better than *NFS: The Run*.



Star Wars: Dark Forces

It's *Star Wars*, but in 3D like *Doom*! That was enough for us way back when, but this just doesn't cut it anymore. Well, apart from your eyes: the graphics are atrocious. We're still fond of it, all the same.



Victory Boxing

Before *Fight Night*, before even *Knockout Kings*, there was *Victory Boxing*. And it was good, melding fighting and training in a manner that paved the way for other games. Bloody hard, we won't be playing it again.

PLAY# PlayList

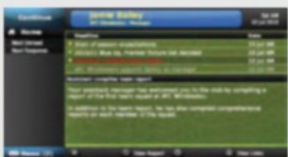
If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS GAMES WE'RE GREAT AT



top five RYAN KING

- 1 Capcom vs SNK 2
- 2 Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike
- 3 Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution
- 4 F.E.A.R.
- 5 Cool Boarders



top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Marvel Pinball
- 2 Tekken 3
- 3 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
- 4 Football Manager Handheld
- 5 Bayonetta



top five STEVE BURNS

- 1 PES 6
- 2 PES 5
- 3 Resident Evil
- 4 PES 3
- 5 PES 2



top five ANDY SALTER

- 1 Skyrim (obviously)
- 2 Fallout: New Vegas
- 3 Warhammer Online
- 4 New Star Soccer
- 5 Poker

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%

game	issue	score
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%

game	issue	score
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Sleeping Dogs PS3	80%
Tales Of Graces f PS3	77%
Risen 2: Dark Waters PS3	64%
Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Artic Games PS3	40%
Puddle PSV	82%
Wizorb PSN	78%

game	issue	score
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Artic Games	222	40%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
LA Noire	206	91%
Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%

game	issue	score
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Despite having arguably one of the worst endings in videogame history, this is still a must for any serious videogame collection.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%

game	issue	score
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%

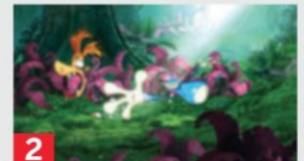
*denotes import review

TOP TEN GAMES THAT SHOULD HAVE SOLD MORE



1

Vanquish



2

Rayman Origins



3

Enslaved: Odyssey To The West



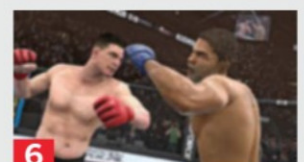
4

Yakuza 4



5

Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning



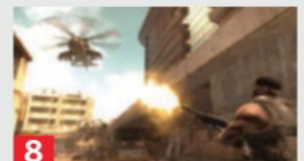
6

EA Sports MMA



7

Binary Domain



8

50 Cent: Blood On The Sand



9

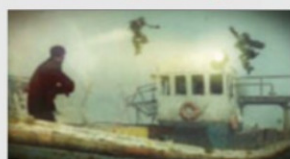
The Club



10

Haze ha ha only joking

PS3 TOP FIVES



FPS

- 1 Battlefield 3
- 1 Modern Warfare 3
- 3 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 4 Resistance 3
- 5 Portal 2



RACING

- 1 Gran Turismo Sport
- 2 Dirt: Showdown
- 3 Wipeout 2048
- 4 Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit
- 5 Motorstorm RC



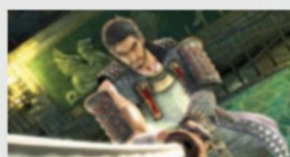
PS VITA

- 1 Sound Shapes
- 2 Gravity Rush
- 3 Wipeout 2048
- 4 Uncharted: Golden Abyss
- 5 Velocity



ADVENTURE

- 1 Mass Effect 3
- 2 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 3 Darksiders 2
- 4 Dark Souls
- 5 Sleeping Dogs



FIGHTING

- 1 Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown
- 2 Street Fighter III
- 3 BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend
- 4 Skullgirls
- 5 Soul Calibur V

game issue score

Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%



With its impressive set-pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, *Resistance 2* is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.

Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%



Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for *Colin McRae*. Not much in it, really.

Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%



Just beating *Blur* to the chequered flag, *Split/Second* is a wonderfully intense racing game in the *Burnout* mould.

Sports Champions	196	83%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%

game issue score

Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tekken 6	184	94%



There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops *Tekken 6* from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.

Tekken Hybrid	213	79%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%



Fans of the series won't be disappointed as Drake returns with some exceptional set pieces and superb action.

Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%



A brilliant surprise from the developer of *Bayonetta* and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.

Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%

game issue score

Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS VITA LISTING



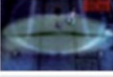
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Wipeout 2048	215	87%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%

game	issue	score
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i>. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubix HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
ExploDemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
flOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Got Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%

game	issue	score
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
 Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
 While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%

game	issue	score
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
 If you loved <i>Portal 2</i>, you'll love this. Swapping portals for dimension altering, it's the same mix of physics-based puzzles and humour.		
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
 One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
 LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
 The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%

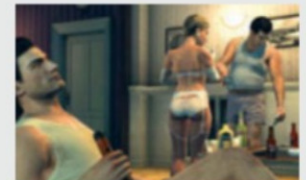
PS3'S BEST GAMES

MAFIA II

81%, PLAY 196



The open world, sandbox genre is a difficult one to break into. Mainly because one of the best series ever created already lives there in the beautiful shape of *Grand Theft Auto*. As such, it's pretty difficult to escape the endless comparisons.



But you do quite often get experiences that are unique; that stand out from those they are compared against. *Mafia II* is by no means better than *GTA IV*, but it's a damn fine companion piece and – dare we say it – is a far more atmospheric game.



This is a world of America post-Second World War, and while we can't say we were alive then (apart from Andy, who is old), it *feels* like it should. It's a similar thing to how *Sleeping Dogs* recently nailed the sense of place.



Yeah, alright, so the missions are a bit standard, the shooting is a bit annoying and it isn't quite as free-roamy drivey as you might expect. But it's such a full experience that it irks us somewhat the game is so ignored.



Plus – and here's the real kicker – you can grab *Mafia II* for about £5, new, these days. A fiver for a dozen hours of quality, finely-crafted entertainment with a fantastic soundtrack? Yeah, we'll take seven copies.

DOWNLOAD THESE PSONE ON PSN EDITION



FINAL FANTASY WHICHEVER ONE YOU LOVE 90+%, Play various

You can get the original through to *IX* (except for *III*), so take your pick. Everyone has their favourites. Ian's is *IX*, Ryan's is *VIII* and Andy's is *Skyrim*. Bless.



METAL GEAR SOLID 93%, Play 187

We played this recently, expecting it to have aged badly. Aside from not quite looking as nice as it could (but still being stylish), it's actually aged really well. Who knew?



BISHI BASHI SPECIAL 61%, Play 175

Ignore the stupid, idiotic score we gave this. We must have been hungover or something. *Bishi Bashi* is brilliant and you need to go play it right now with all of your friends.



DRIVER 90%, Play 171

As with *MGS*, we played this recently and expected an aged charm. Instead we got a really playable, fun game that rewards true player skill and punishes you if you're crap. Bliss.



VAGRANT STORY 82%, Play 189

Just when you think there aren't enough timesink RPGs to get your teeth into, you remember *Vagrant Story* can be had for a few quid. And you play it. And you lose time to it. Again.

game	issue	score
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead	219	89%
The Walking Dead Episode 2	221	90%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING



The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Heilboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%

game	issue	score
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
The Sims 2	137	71%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



IAN DRANSFIELD

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):
DOOM

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):
Nobody has ever needed a reason to play Doom

THERE COMES A time when everyone of a certain age has to go back to *Doom*. They approach their CD wallets, filled to the brim with PlayStation games of generations past. They root around, looking for *Doom*. They can't find *Doom*. I couldn't find *Doom*. Where the hell has my copy of *Doom* gone? I bought that bugger with my own saved-up pounds back in 1995, actually breaking the then-law BBFC 15 rating by a good two years. And now it was gone. Lost. Forever denied to me. I found the piece of paper with all the scrawled passwords on it (some in, I kid thee not, red crayon). I still had the memories. It was all there apart from the key piece: that damnable disc.

Then I looked in the other CD wallet and it was there. No idea why.

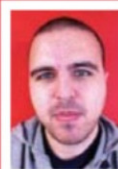
Playing *Doom* is an exercise in relaxation for me these days. Back in the Nineties, it would terrify me – the audio track of the baby crying in some levels was genuinely unnerving. But I've had nearly 20 years of practice – I know what I'm doing. It relaxes. I do nothing but enjoy it. *Doom* is prosaic, rather than terrifying. Over the years, hell on earth has become heavenly.

I love *Doom*.



PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

What has the Play team been indulging in this month?



RYAN KING

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):

I love the film and I love trophies

"Why are you playing that lol." Sometimes you've barely hit start on the title screen when the messages start flying in. People on your friends list who want to know why. Why are you playing that awful game? What's wrong with you? Are you ill? You can't be reviewing it. What are you doing? It must be work. Is it work? "Because I like the film," I type back in feeble defence, before adding "lol" to the end of the message, hoping that makes everything okay. Then there's silence. You think the moment has passed. Then someone else sends a message. You open it.

"Why are you playing that lol."

The film is brilliant, by the way. It's the best movie about being a kid you'll see and it's not even for kids, it's for adults. All the wild things were different parts of Max – his insecurity, his childishness, his need to accept the world doesn't revolve around him any more. If you don't like it, I'll fight you. And that's a promise.

The game? Ehhhh. You can't really make a game about emotions (unless you're David Cage, ha!). So instead they put shadow demons in, loads of easy Trophies and made the whole thing a game where you hit stuff with sticks for three hours. Oh. But hey! Easy Trophies! And now my Trophy level is 14, which means I can... I can... hmmm.

Oh god. What am I doing with my life?

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Jacking bros on the go

PLAY: GTA CHINATOWN WARS

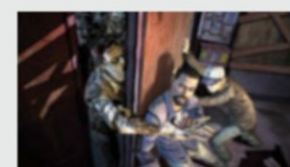
That's not a euphemism – we actually mean car-jacking people while you're playing a game on your portable console. It's also a reason to justify hanging on to your PSP, because *Chinatown Wars* is fantastic.



Terrible games

PLAY: JURASSIC PARK

Sometimes you just have to be reminded that not all games are good. In fact, some games are downright bad. It's good to get that balance, you know? Otherwise you end up taking quality for granted, which is never a good thing.



Developers redeeming themselves

PLAY: THE WALKING DEAD

Also a developer making a bad game means it's even better when it comes back and makes a great game, as Telltale has gone and done with its transition from *JP* to *The Walking Dead*. From horribly horrible to brilliantly brilliant.



Disliking fat

PLAY: EA SPORTS ACTIVE 2

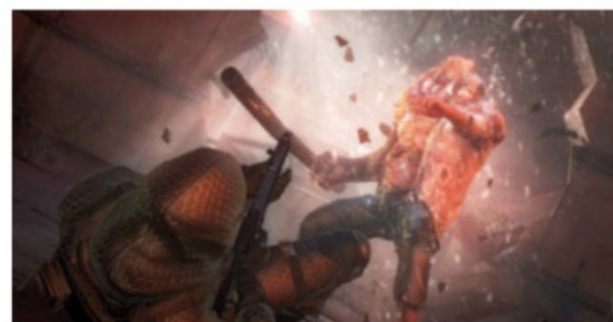
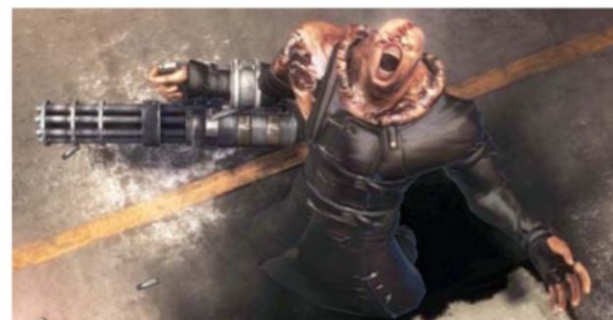
You can probably join a gym or go running or all of that rubbish, but *EA Sports Active 2* allows you to hate fat in the comfort of your own home. Ah, writing about this brings back memories...



Remembering good wrasslin' games

PLAY: WWE SMACKDOWN: HERE COMES THE PAIN

We're looking forward to *WWE 13*, but only because of CM Punk on the cover and the *Attitude*-era content. Other than that, we tend to stick with old wrasslin' games back from when they were actually good, like the PS2's *HCTP*.



RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY



WHAT WE SAID

PLAY 217
"Operation Raccoon City is an insulting franchise stopgap. 14 years after *Resi 2*, this homogenised and tedious nonsense illustrates what happens when a dev doesn't understand the property it's working with. As a single-player campaign this is an almost entirely pointless effort."

33%

metacritic

52
out of 100

WHAT OTHERS SAID

WHY, OH WHY, OH WHY DID YOU BUY RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY? AND IF YOU DIDN'T, WHAT PUT YOU OFF?



ELLIE CLARK I'd rather be infected by the t-Virus than play that game.

OLLY MCCULLY I was really excited for this game, then your previews put me off, big time.

MARTIN MACKINNON Great multiplayer (survivor mode is great) but single player is pretty average, feels like it's unfinished. Playing without real team-mates is awful. Treat it as a squad shooter with zombies and NOT a *Resident Evil* game and it's alright. As a *Resi* game, it's way below standard.

DEAN ALGAR Big disappointment.

PASQUALE PARISI Oh god, it was terrible.

STUART NEWTON Got all hyped for it but found the campaign mode very stodgy, laborious and a chore to complete. The multiplayer was average too, just not enough to keep me engaged. Bring on *Resident Evil 6*, hopefully that will sate my *Resident Evil* fix.

JOSH HEMMING It was alright. Gameplay was a little boring but it was okay.

LEE HEATHER Some of the worst graphics I have ever seen.



@ANGGAYOSI I think the AI is too stupid, I can't say anything. The gameplay is okay, just the AI, why are they so, so stupid...?

@ANDYKUROSAKI *Resi Raccoon City* was horrific. Glitching through walls and floors, terrible combat and an awful campaign. Worst *Resi* ever.

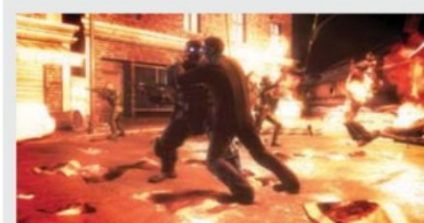
@RYANA_N I played it and enjoyed it too! Completely different kind of *Resident Evil* game but fun in its own right! Especially enjoyed the multiplayer.

@RESH_AYKUT This game was nothing and wasting time. Capcom should make a new *Resident Evil Outbreak* game with old gameplay and next-gen graphics.

@SHORYUDAN While clearly flawed and unfinished, there was obvious potential in the setting. Co-op was surprisingly enjoyable at times.

@_VIXX Played it and enjoyed it. Sure, it's buggy as hell, but as bugs go they're bloody amusing. Multiplayer is good fun too.

@FENIXII It was a pure crap. Abomination. Lazy work and disgrace to gaming in 2012.



Post-Mortem

There were positive reviews, but these were overwhelmed by the negative ones – and *Operation Raccoon City* ended up being a prime example of nothing much mattering beyond the name. This was *Resident Evil*, and people wanted more *Resident Evil*. At least two million people wanted it, apparently, because that's what the game had sold last time Capcom informed anyone – it's sure to be a fair few more by now.

And we can only think of two reasons why. One – as mentioned – the name. People know and love *Resi*, so they bought it. Simple. Two, that those who did buy it were overcome with a mass mania of self-delusion, convincing themselves what they'd put down £50 on wasn't actually a turd in the shape of a Blu-ray, but actually something 'really good, when you give it a chance'. We sound facetious here, but it is a pretty common occurrence, for someone to justify their purchases – nobody wants to admit they've made a mistake (a fairly expensive one too), so we often fall back into our defensive shells and bat away any and all criticism. This blind faith could then lead, in very real terms, to more sales through word of mouth.

They have to be the only reasons it has sold, because *RE:ORC* really is *crap*.



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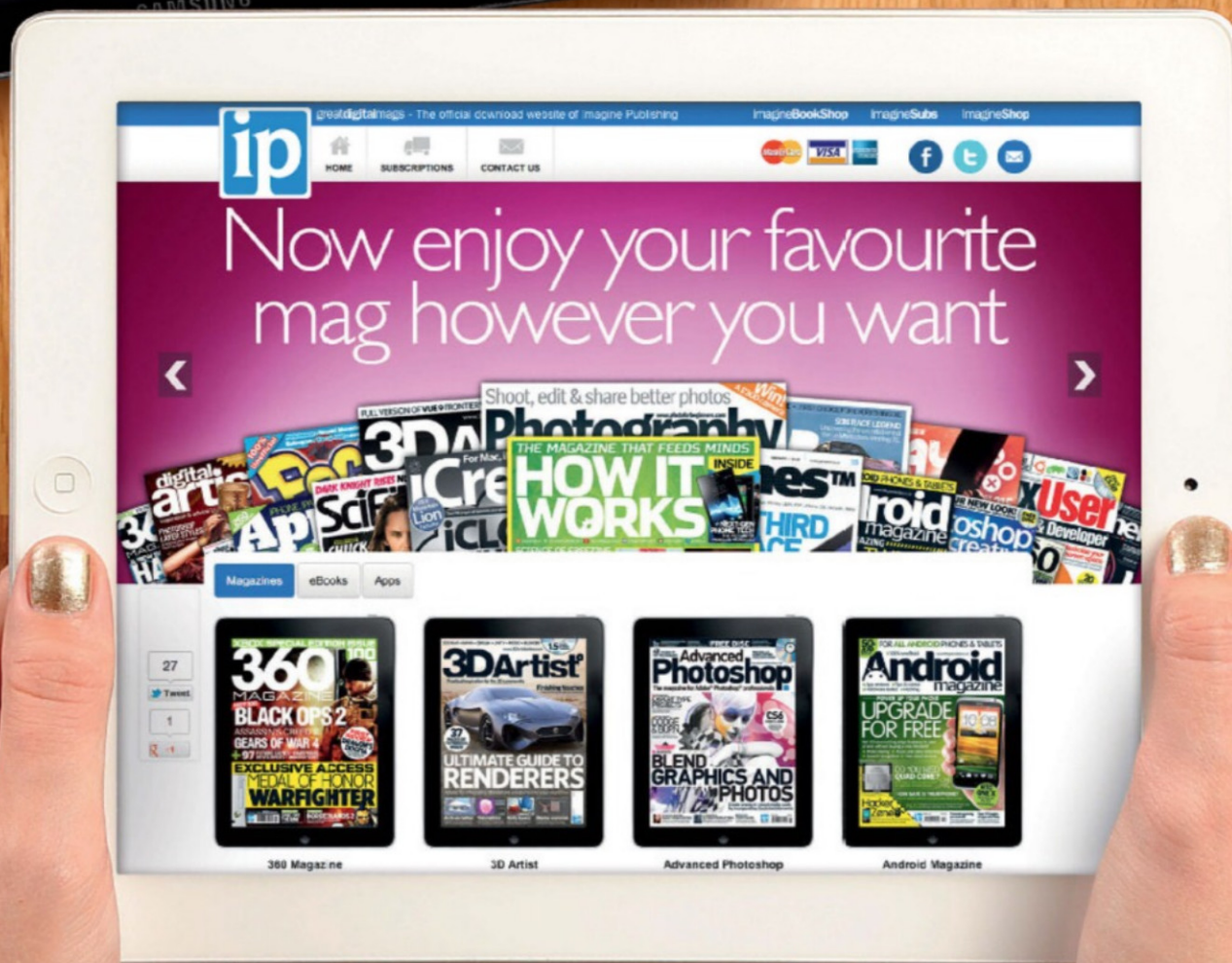
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